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This study concerns the not-so-great captains of the Civil War, the volunteer officers who commanded divisions, brigades, and regiments. It examines their success and failures in the art of dealing with men, their strengths and weaknesses; the leadership problems they faced, and the techniques they used to deal with those problems. Its purpose is to determine those leadership lessons learned which have practical value for officers today. It is a study of people, not battles. Most of the source material for this study was found in official records and in letters, diaries, and memoirs of officers and men of the Volunteer army.

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A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U. S. Army
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degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

ROBERT E. PRICE, Major, U.S. Army

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the individual student author and do not necessarily represent the views of either the United States Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

In the Civil War, the "great captains" of the Union force were professional officers who had been trained in the Regular Army. They were the Regular Army's one major contribution to Northern victory. Otherwise, the small professional army remained insignificant. For all intents and purposes, the huge Volunteer army of citizen-soldiers was the Union Army.

This study concerns the not-so-great captains, the Volunteer officers who commanded not corps and great armies, but divisions, brigades, and regiments. It examines their successes and failures in the art of dealing with men, their strengths and weaknesses, the leadership problems they faced, and the techniques they used to deal with those problems. Its purpose is to determine those leadership lessons learned which have practical value for officers today. It is primarily a study of people, not battles. "The drill regulations, the muskets and the cannon are all out-dated. But the human problems are fresh even in this age of computer analysis."

Most of the source material for this study was found in official records and in letters, diaries, and memoirs of officers and men of the Volunteer army.

During the first months of the war, the Volunteer recruit was a young and independent-minded "sovereign in uniform." Most of his leaders were merely recruits with officers' shoulder straps and knew no more of the military than he. But, generally, his officers were intelligent and motivated. They burned late candles over drill manuals and sketchy literature on leadership. Some fortunate ones learned from senior officers who had once been in the Regular Army. All learned by trial and error, and slowly--very slowly--the Volunteer Force began to look less like a mob and more like an army.

But Appomattox was four years, many battles, and many campfires away. During those four years a number of lessons of leadership were learned which are still valuable for the modern officer's professional consideration:

1) A professional cadre of officers and noncommissioned officers is essential for mobilization of untrained units. Depriving the Volunteer units of experienced cadres during the first year of the Civil War resulted in much floundering and groping. Had a nucleus of Regular Army personnel been placed in Volunteer units early, training and discipline would have been greatly enhanced and the war would probably have been shortened.

2) Acceptance of low-grade personnel into service has a demoralizing effect. In the Volunteer army the low-grade personnel were the bounty-jumpers and substitutes. The resulting desertions caused a demoralizing depletion in ranks. The unreliability of these men in battle deprived loyal soldiers of the confidence they needed in their comrades.

3) The professional officer may experience problems of adjustment when assigned to duty with the citizen soldier. Such problems may arise in regard to modes of dealing with the enlisted soldier or in relationships with citizen-officers. The officer must call on his tact and flexibility and make an earnest effort to work in harmony with his civilian colleagues. Senior officers should be aware that such friction may arise between subordinate officers.

4) Further research is suggested regarding the effects of prior relationships on discipline in Reserve and National Guard units after call to active duty. A major deterrent to discipline in the

Volunteer army early in the war were previous associations of officers and men who had grown up together and worked together in their home communities. This experience suggests an examination of the effects of such associations on discipline during modern mobilization.

5) Men must know that their officers are not lacking in personal courage. The Volunteer soldier placed a high premium on personal courage. He was quick to detect--and to scorn--any officer who possessed too much of "the rascally virtue called caution." Generals were not exempt from scrutiny, and men expected to see them at the front frequently.

6) No officer will enjoy the confidence and regard of his men unless they are convinced he is doing his best to look out for their welfare. In the Volunteer army, a major morale factor was the officer's concern for his men. He was hardly expected to make the soldier's life comfortable, but he was expected to prevent unnecessary hardships and mitigate the necessary ones as much as possible.

7) Troop movements require leadership of the highest order. Poorly planned and conducted troop movements, whether by foot march or conveyance, have an adverse effect on morale. Many of the volunteer's complaints concerned officers' inefficiency, thoughtlessness, and neglect during movements, particularly during marches. Movements are perhaps even more complex today. Officers' carelessness can result in unnecessary fatigue and discomfort, which in turn cause lowered morale and increased straggling.

8) Information enhances discipline and morale and helps prevent fear and panic. Civil War commanders experienced problems of discipline (regarding guard duty and camp sanitation, for example) because the

young volunteer was not fully informed of their importance. He craved news of happenings around him, and news was a definite morale factor. Officers who insured that their troops were informed of the tactical situation found that they not only fought more intelligently but were less apt to panic.

9) Leaders should be aware of the significance of sectional and racial differences among their men. The Western soldier, for example, responded more favorably to less stringent discipline, whereas the soldier in the East was more motivated by the fine points of soldiering. Negro soldiers had difficulty adjusting to changes in climate and suffered heavily from disease. Commanders should be informed of such phenomena so that they may act accordingly.

10) Most soldiers prefer their commander to be a firm disciplinarian. They dislike the martinet but appreciate the disciplinarian--in spite of their gripes. This is evident in Volunteer soldiers' comments about their Regular Army officers.

11) The leader who is gentlemanly in his dealings with subordinates gains--rather than loses--their respect. Far from being interpreted as weakness, courtesy on the part of the superior enhances the subordinate's morale and his regard for the leader. Numerous examples of this were brought out in the study. Soldiers particularly appreciated in officers the virtue of approachability.

12) Discipline imposed by the well regarded leader receives a more whole-hearted response. Examples in the study indicated that when men felt a high regard for their officers they reinforced commanded discipline with self-imposed discipline.

13) Unorthodox techniques of leadership are sometimes appropriate. A young staff officer, for example, stemmed a panic by striking men with his sword. A general prevented straggling in his own brigade by having his troops hoot and jeer at stragglers from other units. Such unusual methods were effective in unusual situations.

14) Parade ground discipline and battle discipline are not conclusively related. Some regiments drilled superbly but panicked on the battlefield. The Army of the West (particularly Sherman's forces) had little discipline by the usual standards but marched hard and fought well.

15) Soldiers will not repeatedly carry out orders which they consider stupid and dangerous. Eventually they will balk. They may continue to go through the motions, but they will find a way to thwart those orders. Volunteer troops were repeatedly massed and thrown against rebel earthworks in frontal assaults and were repeatedly repulsed with heavy losses. Finally, when they had made up their minds their lives were being wasted, they disobeyed.

16) The commander who has undisciplined officers will have undisciplined troops. The commander who is unwilling to correct negligent officers can hardly expect his officers to correct negligent men.

17) Strong leadership is required to prevent troops from looting. Even well-disciplined troops will loot unless firm precautions are taken. When troops are legitimately "living off the land," as may sometimes happen, they should clearly understand the limits of authorized confiscation.

18) Public recognition of deserving individuals and units is an effective tool for development of morale and esprit. Volunteer commanders were generous with praise for the achievements of men and units. General orders, promotions, and personal compliments of commanders were effective motivators.

19) Identification with the unit enhances morale and esprit de corps. Volunteer commanders aided this identification by recognizing regimental achievements, promoting competition between regiments, and encouraging symbolism. These techniques are no less effective today. It is the wise commander who lets the "banners flaunt and bugles blow."

"We can always learn more [about leadership] and sometimes it can be learned from the records of a war fought more than a century ago."

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PREFACE

Every great war has produced "great captains." The American Civil War produced more than its share. Library shelves are laden with hundreds--perhaps thousands--of books written by and about the great captains of both the North and the South. The student of the principles of war and military leadership finds these books rich with lessons to be learned. If he has the judgment to consider the actions of these leaders in the light of the times and existing conditions and then relate to the modern environment those actions which stand the test of time, there is much he can learn. He "can learn . . . what to avoid and what to emulate, and therefore can shape and develop his own qualities for the better."¹

But what of those not-so-great captains, the officers who commanded not corps and great armies, but divisions, brigades, and regiments? What can we learn from them? In official records and in letters, diaries, and memoirs are found the accounts of their successes and failures, their personal strengths and weaknesses, the problems they faced, and the techniques they used to deal with those problems. And in those accounts lies an opportunity, for an analysis

¹U. S., Department of the Army, Department of the Army Pamphlet No. 20-200, The Writing of American Military History (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, June 1956), p. 8.

and understanding of the actions and omissions of those lesser known leaders will help today's officers become better leaders.

This study describes and evaluates the leadership of Union Volunteer army officers in the Civil War at division level and below. No hypotheses have been confirmed; none have been developed. Conclusions, however, have been drawn. I take no offense if the reader finds the conclusions more interesting than profound. My hope is that, in some small measure, he finds them useful in his noble (but probably futile) search for perfection as a military leader.

I am indebted to a number of persons who made this task easier. These include the staff of the Command and General Staff College library, who were consistently helpful. Colonel William A. Dean and Lieutenant Colonel Thomas B. Maertens, faculty advisors with whom I had frequent contact, offered well-considered comments and suggestions and much-needed encouragement. The assistance of Dr. Ivan J. Birrer, Educational Advisor, is also appreciated.

Finally, I am indebted to my wife, Jean, who was, in so many ways, the unsung heroine of this endeavor. She is the only woman of the 1960's who has lost a husband in the Civil War.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Scope of Study

One hundred years ago, on 9 April 1865, Lee surrendered his forces to Grant at Appomattox Court House, and four years of civil war were ended. This study encompasses the philosophy, problems, and practice of leadership among commissioned officers in the Union Volunteer army divisions during that Civil War period 1861-1865.

Limitations Placed on Study

Matters Not Examined

Matters of organization, administration, logistics, tactics, and campaign actions will be examined only as required to further the examination of leadership. This is primarily a study of people, not battles.

Concentration on Soldier's Mind and Spirit

The Volunteer officer's attainment of unit proficiency, one of the indicators of leadership,¹ will be examined only to the extent that proficiency was affected by his ability (or inability) to attain

¹U. S., Department of the Army, Field Manual 22-100, Military Leadership, hereafter referred to as FM 22-100 (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, June 1961), p. 3.

the other three indicators, i.e., morale, esprit de corps, and discipline. Field Manual 22-100 points out that proficiency is technical, tactical, and physical ability.² It follows, then, that proficiency is achieved primarily through sound training in tactical, technical, and administrative skills. Certainly, the leader's role as a trainer is a vital one and it is treated in this study, although not as a separate subject and not in great detail. Study of the broad field of Civil War training and training methods would better be handled as a separate project in its own right. This study deals, in the main, with matters of the mind and heart rather than battle formations and the functioning of the musket. Concentration on the human element may prove more fruitful for the student of leadership, for while battle formations change and muskets change, the nature of man remains basically unchanged. A Department of Army pamphlet on military history emphasizes this point as follows:

According to the best authorities man and his reactions to combat have changed less than other elements in war. Regardless of improvements in materiel man still reacts very much as he has always reacted in battle.³

The wisdom of focusing a study of leadership on the mind and soul of the soldier is further borne out by General George C. Marshall's statement that "the soldier's heart, the soldier's spirit, the soldier's soul, are everything. . . . With it [i.e., the soldier's morale]

²Ibid., pp. 40-41.

³U. S., Department of the Army, Department of the Army Pamphlet No. 20-200, The Writing of American Military History (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, June 1956), p. 18.

all things are possible, without it everything else, planning, preparation, production, count for naught."⁴

General Marshall's view was not a new one by any means. General William T. Sherman expressed essentially the same view in his memoirs when he wrote that "there is a soul to an army as well as to the individual man, and no general can accomplish the full work of his army unless he commands the soul of his men, as well as their bodies and legs."⁵

Definition of Leadership Terms

General

Any discussion and analysis of military leadership of a war fought a century ago must be preceded by a determination of criteria to be used. By what definition of leadership shall officers' conduct of that day be recognized as leadership? Against what standard shall their actions be evaluated--a modern standard, or one of that day?

A contemporary concept of leadership has been adopted for this study since whatever lessons are learned are for reflection and use by today's officer in today's environment.

Definitions

Military leadership.--Military leadership, as defined in Field Manual 22-100, is "the art of influencing and directing men in such

⁴George Catlett Marshall, Selected Speeches and Statements of General of the Army George C. Marshall, ed. H. A. De Weerd (Washington, D. C.: The Infantry Journal, 1945), pp. 121-25.

⁵William T. Sherman, Memoirs of General William T. Sherman (2d ed., rev.; New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1886), Vol. II, p. 387.

a way as to obtain their willing obedience, confidence, respect, and loyal cooperation in order to accomplish the mission."⁶

Leadership actions and orders.--In describing the nature of leadership among Civil War Volunteer officers, this study will make extensive use of descriptions of their leadership actions and orders. Such actions and orders are defined as "anything a leader does or says to enable him to influence and direct his command."⁷

Leadership techniques.--It is by his actions and orders that a leader puts into motion the leadership techniques he has chosen to use. "The techniques of leadership are the courses of action a leader considers in order to achieve his leadership goals." While "there are literally thousands of leadership techniques,"⁸ and no study could ever come close to covering them all, the numerous techniques (i.e., courses of action) used in this study as illustrations should give the reader a representative picture of the officer's contribution to the leadership climate in the Union Volunteer army.

Leadership climate.--"The climate of leadership is the net result and totality of the actual practices of leadership by all leaders in a command regardless of grade or position."⁹

Indicators of military leadership.--As previously mentioned, there are certain recognized indications of leadership which may be

⁶Fm 22-200, p. 3.

⁷Ibid.

⁸U. S. Army Command and General Staff College, Reference Book 22-1, Leadership (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1 July 1964), p. 1-3.

⁹Fm 22-100, p. 6.

used in measuring the "wholesomeness" of the leadership climate in a unit. The leader's continuous task is to develop these indications in his unit. The techniques he uses and the success he achieves in this development provide an insight into the nature of his leadership. Accordingly, much of this study is devoted to the Union volunteer officer's conduct in regard to the following four leadership indicators:

1) Morale--

the individual's state of mind. It depends upon his attitude toward everything that affects him--his fellow soldiers, his leaders, Army life in general, and other things which seem important to him. Morale is closely related to the satisfying of a man's basic needs. . . . High morale is an affirmative positive state of mind which gives the soldier a feeling of confidence and well-being that enables him to face hardship with courage, endurance, and determination.¹⁰

2) Military discipline--

a state of individual and group training that creates a mental attitude resulting in correct conduct and automatic obedience to military law under all conditions. It is founded in respect for, and loyalty to, military law and authority. . . . Military discipline is an extension and a specialized application of the discipline of any organized society. True discipline is habitual, automatic obedience to command, an obedience that preserves initiative and functions even in the absence of the commander. . . . Discipline . . . is best fostered in an individual by appealing to his sense of reason.¹¹

3) Esprit de corps--

[the] mental and emotional state of the unit.¹² [It] is the loyalty to, pride in, and enthusiasm for the unit shown by its members.¹³ Past and present unit achievement and success

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 38.

¹¹ U. S. Army Command and General Staff College, p. 1-1.

¹² U. S. Army Command and General Staff College, p. 1-2.

¹³ FM 22-100, p. 39.

in battle are strong forces in raising esprit de corps.
Esprit is enhanced when unit identification is increased
 and, conversely, is lowered when identification is de-
 creased. . . .¹⁴

4) Proficiency--

the technical, tactical, and physical ability of the
 individual and the unit to perform the job or mission.
 . . . Proficiency results largely from training;¹⁵

Background

General

In this study, I have avoided involvement in irrelevant dates,
 statistics, and details of battle tactics and campaign strategy.
 Hence, the reader need not be a Civil War buff to follow the course
 of the presentation. Certain background information, however, may be
 helpful and is presented at this point.

Theaters of War

Generally, the Civil War took place in two theaters known, un-
 officially, as the eastern and western theaters. The eastern theater
 extended from the Atlantic to the Appalachians, the western theater
 from the Appalachians west to the Mississippi. Union forces operating
 in the eastern theater and western theaters were sometimes referred
 to as the Army of the East and the Army of the West, respectively.

Major Elements of the Union Army

Regular Army.--At the outbreak of the Civil War, the only

¹⁴U. S. Army Command and General Staff College, p. 1-2.

¹⁵FM 22-100, pp. 40-41.

active military force in being was the Regular Army, with an approximate strength of 16,000 men. Soon thereafter it was expanded, but "at no time during the war did . . . [it] attain a strength of 25,000 men."¹⁶ Hence, the Regular Army constituted less than two percent of the total Union force of over 1,000,000 men.¹⁷ Furthermore, most of the Regular Army troops were employed on frontier duty throughout the war. So the Regular Army's contribution to the war effort, so far as organized units were concerned, was relatively insignificant and is not considered in this study.

Militia.--In addition to expanding the Regular Army at the outbreak of the war, the President issued a call upon the states for a total of 75,000 Militiamen for three months service.¹⁸ The states' understrength and untrained Militia regiments were quickly and easily filled with patriotic volunteers and sent to training camps.

It soon became evident, however, that it was going to take much longer than ninety days to put down the rebellion. Recruiting was then begun for a large Volunteer army of three-year enlistees. The Militiamen already serving were called upon to enlist for three years. Many did and were absorbed into the Volunteer army.¹⁹ Those who declined were sent home at the end of their three-month enlistments.²⁰ That ended the short-lived active service of the Militia.

¹⁶ Sherman, p. 383.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 413.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 382.

¹⁹ John M. Paver, What I Saw from 1861 to 1864: Personal Recollections of John M. Paver (Indianapolis: Scott-Miller Co., n.d.), pp. 13-15.

²⁰ Sherman, Vol. I, p. 191.

Because the Militiamen were volunteers and because of their early absorption into the Volunteer army, they are considered in this study as part of the Volunteer army. In discussing the first months of the war no distinction will be made between volunteers serving under Militia banners and those who had enlisted for three years.

Volunteer army.--The Volunteer army (with various official designations, including Volunteer Force, Volunteer Service, and United States Volunteers)²¹ was, for all intents and purposes, the Union Army. At the close of the war, over one million names were on its muster-rolls.²²

The Volunteer army was kept separate from the Regular Army. That is, no Volunteer soldiers were placed in Regular Army units and no Regular enlistees saw service in Volunteer units. The Government's reason for this careful separation was that the Volunteer army was only a temporary, emergency force and, at the end of the war, could be disbanded without affecting the permanent army.²³

Basic Organizational Structure of the Union Army

Armies.--The largest field commands in the Federal force were the various armies, each with a varying number of army corps--usually three or more. The most important army in the eastern theater was the

²¹The term "Volunteer army" was not an official designation, as was the term "Regular Army." The terms "Volunteer army," "Volunteer," and "Volunteers" were--and are here--used as synonyms for the official titles shown above.

²²Sherman, Vol. II, p. 413.

²³Jacob D. Cox, Military Reminiscences of the Civil War (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), Vol. I, p. 39.

Army of the Potomac. In the western theater there were two major armies, the Army of the Cumberland and the Army of the Tennessee. The authorized rank of an army commander was major-general.

Corps.--Normally, there were three or four divisions in each army corps.²⁴ Corps were also commanded by major-generals.

Divisions.--Each division normally consisted of three brigades.²⁵ Brigades were sometimes transferred from one division to another. Consequently, the organization of the division was not permanent.²⁶ Divisions, too, were commanded by major-generals.

Brigades.--The brigade, the authorized command of a brigadier general, consisted of two or more regiments, the exact number varying widely. The average appears to be four or five, although some brigades had as many as nine regiments. Mixed brigades were sometimes formed of infantry and cavalry regiments. Brigades sometimes contained regiments from both eastern and western states; however, this was more the exception than the rule.²⁷

Regiments.--The regiment was referred to by General Sherman as "the family," and he called its colonel "the father."²⁸ There were

²⁴M. A. De Wolfe Howe (ed.), Marching with Sherman: Passages from the Letters and Campaign Diaries of Henry Hitchcock (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1927), p. 185.

²⁵Sherman, Vol. II, pp. 523-35.

²⁶John Beatty, Memoirs of a Volunteer (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1946), p. 190.

²⁷John Gibbon, Personal Recollections of the Civil War (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1928), p. 210; Sherman, vol. II, pp. 523-35; George A. Townsend, Rustics in Rebellion: A Yankee Reporter on the Road to Richmond, 1861-1865 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1950), p. 55.

²⁸Sherman, Vol. II, p. 385.

infantry, cavalry, and artillery regiments. Infantry regiments were by far the most numerous and each consisted of ten companies. Total authorized strength of the regiment was approximately 1,000 men.²⁹

Division level and below.--Leadership on division level and below, as referred to in the title of this study, will include not only infantry and cavalry divisions and lower units, but also artillery units attached to, and maneuvering with, infantry and cavalry.

Summary of echelons.--A young Volunteer private in the Army of the Potomac summarized the echelons of command when he wrote, in a letter to his parents shortly after arriving at camp, "We have a new handle to our names now. It is Co A, 7th Regt., 2nd Brigade, 2nd Division, 1st Army Corps. What do you think of all that?"³⁰

²⁹U. S., War Department, General Orders Affecting the Volunteer Force (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1862), pp. 1-4.

³⁰Leo W. and John I. Faller, Dear Folks at Home (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: The Telegraphic Press, 1963), p. 65.

CHAPTER II

THE LEADER AND THE LED

General

Leadership is a function of the leader, the led, and the situation. Any one of these may be the controlling factor in the solution of a leadership problem; however, each will normally exert its influence, even though, on the part of the leader, it may be an unconscious influence. Just as no two situations are ever precisely the same, neither are any two leaders, or any two followers or groups of followers.¹ But generalizations can be made and are appropriate at this point.

Subsequent chapters will describe various leadership problems and the surrounding situations. The purpose of this chapter is to describe, generally, the human element injected into those situations, that is, the officer and the soldier. To understand the nature of the leader and the led, as well as the environment, is essential to the evaluation of the handling of a leadership problem.

The Officer

First Months of the War

Source and selection.--Appointment of officers in the Volunteer

¹U. S. Army Command and General Staff College, Reference Book 22-1, Leadership (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1 July 1964), pp. 1-3, 1-4.

army was the privilege of state governors. Although the regiments, when formally mustered, were under the immediate jurisdiction of the War Department, the state governors retained the power to appoint all company and regimental officers. Brigade and division officers and all general officers were appointed by the President.²

The common procedure for selection of company officers was for the men in each newly-formed company to hold an election, with the governor then awarding commissions to the winners.³

At first, the public thought the war "was to be a picnic." As a result, in the appointment of officers, military knowledge and ability were not considered essential. During the first two years of the war, politics and personal influence played the key role in selection of officers.⁴ A person of influence or popularity in his community would be elected the captain of a Volunteer company. Anyone who was able to raise a regiment was almost certain to be commissioned a colonel and named regimental commander, even though he may be a doctor, politician, or butcher.⁵

One instance in which the public took an interest in the awarding of a commission was the case of an enlistee who had been a judge and, later, a member of Congress. He had enlisted as a private,

²U. S., War Department, General Orders Affecting the Volunteer Force (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1862), p. 14.

³John M. Paver, What I Saw from 1861 to 1865: Personal Recollections of John M. Paver (Indianapolis: Scott-Miller Co., n.d.), p. 14.

⁴John Gibbon, Personal Recollections of the Civil War (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1928), pp. 420-21.

⁵Ibid., p. 415.

"but public sentiment forced the State Government to make him a major."⁶

The only available evidence of the use of state examinations in awarding commissions is found in a letter written by a Volunteer captain from Connecticut. He described the state examinations as shams. "My own," he wrote, "consisted of a few minutes of genial conversation about the chances of European interference."⁷

Not all appointees were militarily ignorant. During the first year of the war, a relatively small number of West Point graduates who had resigned from the Regular Army to go into civil life volunteered their services and were commissioned by their state governors.⁸ Still another source of experienced officers were foreigners--immigrants who had seen service in foreign armies and soldiers of fortune who, at the outbreak of the war, had come to this country seeking new fortunes and adventure.⁹

Characteristics.--The Secretary of War furnished the governors suggested maximum age limits for the various officer ranks as follows:¹⁰

⁶George A. Townsend, Rustics in Rebellion: A Yankee Reporter on the Road to Richmond, 1861-1865 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1950), pp. 124-25.

⁷John William De Forest, A Veteran's Adventures, ed. James H. Croushore (New Haven, n.p., 1946), Editor's Preface.

⁸Jacob D. Cox, Military Reminiscences of the Civil War (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), Vol. I, p. 25.

⁹Paver, p. 16; Henry Murray Calvert, Reminiscences of a Boy in Blue (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1920), pp. 16-17; George B. McClellan, "Foreigners Fight in the Northern Army," The Blue and the Gray, ed. Henry Steele Commager (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950), Vol. I, p. 319.

¹⁰U. S., War Department, The War of the Rebellion: Official Records, hereafter referred to as Official Records (Washington, 1880-1901), Series III, Vol. I, pp. 227-28.

Lieutenant, 1st and 2d	22
Captain	30
Major.	35
Lieutenant Colonel	40
Colonel.	45

With the average soldier twenty-five years of age,¹¹ it is evident that many company officers were younger than the men in the ranks. Of the field grade officers, few had reached middle age.¹²

In spite of the system of selection, the personal caliber of the average officer was reasonably high. In fact, a Volunteer regiment from Connecticut had as its colonel a former mayor of Hartford.¹³ In a Wisconsin regiment was a lieutenant who, after the war, became a United States Senator.¹⁴ A newspaper reporter with the Union Army described a Philadelphia lawyer, commander of a Pennsylvania regiment, as "the most consistent and intelligent soldier in the brigade. He . . . appeared to be in his element at the head of a regiment, and was generally admitted to be an efficient officer."¹⁵ A Volunteer regimental commander described a fellow officer in his division as follows:

¹¹Paver, pp. 98-99.

¹²Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, War Papers, Commandery of the State of Wisconsin (Milwaukee: Burdick, Armitage & Allen, 1896), Vol. II, p. 360.

¹³De Forest, Editor's Preface.

¹⁴Michael H. Fitch, Echoes of the Civil War (New York: R. F. Fenno & Co., 1905), pp. 121-22.

¹⁵Townsend, pp. 111-12.

Colonel Owen has been . . . [reconnoitering] the mountain on our right. The colonel is a good thinker, an excellent conversationalist, and a very learned man. Geology is his darling and he keeps one eye on the enemy and the other on the rocks.

However, the same officer, in another description, clearly showed his unhappiness with the personal characteristics of a Colonel Wagner, who "neither thinks clearly nor talks with any degree of exactness. He has a loose, slipshod, indefinite way with him that tends to confusion and leads to misunderstandings and trouble."

Regarding his new division commander, he recognized his professional knowledge, but chose to reserve judgment on his general ability:

General Reynolds is a graduate of West Point, and has the theory of war completely; but whether he has the broad, practical common sense, more important than book knowledge, time will determine.¹⁶

General McClellan, in his memoirs, discussed the foreigners who were commissioned in the Union Army. He objected, generally, to the policy of "drumming up officers from all parts of the world," and wrote:

[It] sometimes produced strange results and brought us rare specimens of the class vulgarly known as "hard cases." Most of the officers thus obtained had left their own armies for the armies' good, although there were admirable and honorable exceptions. . . . Few were of the slightest use to us, and I think the reason why the German regiments so seldom turned out well was that their officers were so often men without character.¹⁷

With the probable exception of the foreign soldier of fortune, the same patriotic fervor that swept the Union served as the great

¹⁶ John Beatty, Memoirs of a Volunteer (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1946), p. 45.

¹⁷ McClellan, The Blue and the Gray, Vol. I, p. 318-19.

motivator for the new officer. He wanted to do his share "in the great contest now taking place for the maintenance of the Union."¹⁸

But intelligence, education, and patriotism notwithstanding, many new Volunteer officers proved unqualified for command. Some lacked the intelligence and education the others had; some lacked physical stamina. Others were men of intemperate habits. Although almost everyone lacked military knowledge, some officers also lacked military aptitude. Some were so fixed in habits of mind and body as to be unable to learn the new business of the military. One general officer wrote that this inflexibility--this inability to adapt to the new situation--was the reason "middle-aged men seldom made good company officers."¹⁹

Later War Years

Source and selection.--As the war wore on and vacancies occurred in the officer ranks, many of them were filled in the same manner as the original appointments.²⁰ It was not unusual for a commander in the field to receive a newly appointed officer (perhaps even an incompetent and untried general appointed by the President) and an order "from high authority that he be placed in command where he must necessarily be over the heads of thoroughly competent soldiers [officers] who had demonstrated their fitness to command on the field of battle."²¹

¹⁸Hazard Stevens, The Life of Isaac Ingalls Stevens (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1901), Vol. II, p. 316; Faver, p. 14; Theodore Lyman, Meade's Headquarters, 1863-1865, ed. George R. Agassiz (Boston: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1922), p. 2.

¹⁹Cox, Vol. I, pp. 168-69.

²⁰U. S., War Department, General Orders Affecting the Volunteer Force, p. 23.

²¹Gibbon, pp. 420-21.

Many thoroughly competent enlisted soldiers eventually donned officers' shoulder straps. Boards were set up to select enlisted men for promotion to commissioned ranks, and during the last two years of the war the commissioning of veteran noncommissioned officers from the ranks became the chief method of obtaining officers.²² A brigadier general commanding a brigade wrote in his diary in August 1863 that "from sergeants applying for commissions we are able to select splendid men--strong, healthy, well-informed, and of considerable military experience. . . ." Many white enlisted men were commissioned in colored regiments, where great effort was made to find good officers.²³

Less than a year after the start of the war, still another source began to produce officers for the Volunteer Force, many of them for the higher grades. The Government reversed its policy prohibiting Regular Army officers from taking commissions in the Volunteers. The officers who transferred, although relatively small in number, had a wealth of training and experience to offer and were to prove valuable in the molding of the Army.²⁴ They were strict disciplinarians, however, and many of them, by nature and education, were martinets.²⁵

What about those officers who, for various reasons, were unqualified? Chapter V will discuss eliminations of officers and show that after the first months of the war many incompetent and otherwise

²²Official Records, Series I, Vol. XLII, Part I, pp. 809-10.

²³Beatty, pp. 230-31; C. C. Andrews, "The Surrender of the Third Regiment, Minnesota Volunteer Infantry," Glimpses of the Nation's Struggle, ed. The Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, Minnesota Commandery (St. Paul, Minn.: St. Paul Book and Stationery Co., 1887), Vol. I, p. 367.

²⁴Cox, Vol. I, p. 17.

²⁵Gibbon, pp. 10-11.

unfit officers were eliminated, leaving a much improved quality of leadership.

Characteristics.--In general, then, the average Volunteer officer--at least after the first year--was intelligent, reasonably well educated, motivated, and no longer a recruit in officer's clothing.

The Soldier

First Months of the War

Source and selection.--Volunteer recruits, many of them the promising young men of their communities,²⁶ came from farms, factories, offices, and schools. A few of the Americans had seen military service. An example of these was the volunteer who was made first sergeant of his cavalry troop because he was a "trained soldier, who had served for seventeen years in the regular cavalry."²⁷ In addition, there came a considerable number of immigrants and foreign soldiers of fortune "from all known and unknown lands" who had served in "all possible and impossible armies."²⁸

The system of selection was simple. A veteran later recalled that the "first companies were made up of picked men; picked because they showed [the] most enthusiasm."²⁹ A man had only to satisfy the mustering officer that he was not "apparently over forty-five or under

²⁶Cox, Vol. I, p. 33.

²⁷Calvert, p. 19.

²⁸George T. Stevens, Three Years in the Sixth Corps (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1870), pp. 75-76; McClellan, The Blue and the Gray, Vol. I, p. 318; Paver, p. 99.

²⁹Paver, p. 14.

eighteen," submit to a perfunctory medical inspection, and await the call for mustering into service.³⁰

Characteristics.--Although the average soldier was twenty-five years of age, the eighteen year group was the largest age group, the nineteen year group next largest, and so on.³¹ Actually, because of the laxity of mustering officers, many of the "eighteen year old men" were fourteen to sixteen year old boys.³²

Regarding occupations: 48 per cent were farmers, 24 per cent mechanics, 16 per cent laborers, 5 per cent clerks and bookkeepers, 3 per cent professional men, and 4 per cent miscellaneous.³³

A Vermont brigade was "composed of men from nearly every walk in life,--farmers and mechanics, manufacturers and the professional men were there,--nearly all had a common school education, and some were students and graduates of colleges."³⁴

One heterogeneous division from Pennsylvania was made up of "grave gentlemen in spectacles, studious young men in green glasses, pale young men who were evidently more at home behind the counter than in line of battle, roughs who had not been tamed by the discipline of military life, and boys who, for the first time, had left the paternal mansion, . . ."³⁵

³⁰Official Records, Series III, Vol. I, p. 68; Ibid., Series III, Vol. II, pp. 236-37.

³¹Paver, pp. 98-99.

³²Official Records, Series III, Vol. II, pp. 236-37.

³³Paver, pp. 98-99.

³⁴Lewis A. Grant, "The Old Vermont Brigade at Petersburg," Glimpses of the Nation's Struggle, Vol. I, pp. 397-98.

³⁵George T. Stevens, pp. 155-56.

Moving west of the Appalachians, it appears that the men in the Army of the West were generally more rough-hewn. Of the men in the Ohio regiments, one of their generals wrote, "The men were mostly of a rough and reckless class, and gave a good deal of trouble by insubordination; but they did not lack courage, and after they had been under discipline for a while, became good fighting regiments."³⁶

The men of a Wisconsin regiment were described as "rough-mannered, great-hearted farmers, wood-choppers, and tradesmen"--impulsive but brave and unselfish.³⁷ Indiana men were "stout, hearty, intelligent."³⁸

In regard to the men of foreign origin: Some of them were "tough characters, who gave the officers much trouble." The Germans, for example, had a reputation as being men of doubtful integrity--"men who could carry off anything except a red hot stove."³⁹ Although their neatness of dress and perfection on the drill field were recognized, their individual courage and dependability on the battlefield were unpredictable.⁴⁰

The mass of the army was intelligent,⁴¹ and the average soldier had a great deal of common sense. In this regard, the writings of Union officers contained a number of references to the soldiers' bayonets as "bayonets that think."⁴²

³⁶Cox, Vol. I, p. 61.

³⁷Townsend, p. 55.

³⁸Beatty, p. 62.

³⁹Paver, pp. 16, 84.

⁴⁰George T. Stevens, p. 185.

⁴¹Edwin C. Mason, "Recollections of the Mine Run Campaign," Glimpses of the Nation's Struggle, Vol. I, p. 327.

⁴²Daniel Leasure, "Personal Observations and Experiences in the Pope Campaign in Virginia," Ibid., Vol. I, p. 137.

Nevertheless, the young volunteer felt deeply his military ignorance. He was "ready to yield to any pretense of superior knowledge" and to any order given him--as long as it made any sense to him--and to trust himself to anyone who would offer to lead him. He wanted a leader and he wanted one he could look up to.⁴³

His motivation was his strong belief in the cause (mixed, perhaps, with youthful desire for adventure). He was unashamedly and sentimentally patriotic, and he was willing to undergo any hardships for a chance to fight the rebels.⁴⁴

Later War Years

Source and selection.--The system of recruiting for volunteers continued throughout the war. "Patriotic crossroad farmer[s]" and men from "most every profession or trade" continued to enter the ranks. Along with them, however, came "the gambler, who enlisted in order that he could get better acquainted with the boys after payday, . . ."⁴⁵

Enlistments were spurred by a system of bounties. An enlistee collected not only the Federal bounty, which might amount to as much as six hundred dollars, but also a bounty paid by his state government and, in many cases, by his city and county governments as well.

In March 1863, a draft law was passed, and the army began to

⁴³Cox, Vol. I, p. 14.

⁴⁴Henry Norton (ed.), Deeds of Daring: History of the 8th New York Volunteer Cavalry (Norwich, N. Y.: Chanango Telegraph Printing House, 1889), p. 13; Leo W. and John I. Faller, Dear Folks at Home (Harrisburg, Penn.: The Telegraphic Press, 1831), p. 2; Calvert, p. 14.

⁴⁵G. A. Armes, Ups and Downs of An Army Officer (Washington, D. C.: n.n., 1900), p. 129.

receive conscripts. Some were "substitute conscripts," paid by drafted citizens to perform their service for them.⁴⁶

Beginning in 1862, Negroes were recruited, and colored regiments were formed. Some of the recruits were from northern states, but most were former slaves who had fled from their masters at the approach of Union armies.⁴⁷

Characteristics.--As the war progressed, the eager, young volunteer became a "veteran volunteer," no less motivated, no less reliable, but no longer so willing to blindly place his faith in anyone who wore shoulder straps. When he went into a fight, he wanted to see a fair prospect that it was "going to pay." He had a mind of his own, and he was not afraid to let his commanders know it.⁴⁸

The coming of the conscripts, and particularly the substitute conscripts, seriously diluted the quality of the Volunteer army. Soldiers and officers alike were too vehement on that point to leave any doubt. The substitutes were generally of low character, of little or no use to their units, and distrusted by the other men.

"Bounty jumpers" were another disruptive element. These were men who enlisted for the bounty, deserted at the first opportunity, and enlisted again elsewhere.⁴⁹ Their motivation, as one division

⁴⁶William T. Sherman, Memoirs of General William T. Sherman (2d ed., rev.; New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1886), Vol. II, p. 387; Official Records, Series III, Vol. V, p. 725; Rufus R. Dawes, Service with the Sixth Wisconsin Volunteers (Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1962), p. 202.

⁴⁷Official Records, Series III, Vol. XV, p. 1014.

⁴⁸John M. Schofield, Forty-Six Years in the Army (New York: The Century Co., 1897), pp. 145, 155.

⁴⁹Dawes, p. 202; Arnes, p. 73; Cox, Vol. I, p. 165.

commander expressed it, "was simply sordid gain unmixed with any sentiment of patriotism or loyalty to the government."⁵⁰

The Negro soldier was uneducated but quick and eager to learn drill and discipline. He was simple, highly religious, and affectionate. He was intensely loyal to officers he liked.⁵¹ One colonel with little faith in the Negroes called them "humble hewers of wood and drawers of water,"⁵² and it was for just such work that many of them were used. Many of the Negro regiments were, in fact, used as labor regiments.⁵³

Negroes who did see action, however, proved no less courageous and reliable than white soldiers and were generally considered good fighters.⁵⁴ They were more highly motivated than many whites, for they knew if the North lost the war or they were captured by the enemy they would be returned to slavery. As the white colonel of a Negro regiment put it, "They fought with ropes around their necks."⁵⁵

Comparison

From all this now emerges an interesting comparison of the leader and the led. It can be generally stated that, during the early months of the war, the officer and the soldier had two salient characteristics in common: total lack of military knowledge and experience;

⁵⁰Gibbon, pp. 227-30.

⁵¹Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Army Life in a Black Regiment (Boston: Lee and Shepard, Publishers, 1882), pp. 10-11, 255.

⁵²Lyman, p. 102.

⁵³Higginson, p. 278.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 251; Charles A. Dana, Recollections of the Civil War (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1898), p. 86.

⁵⁵Higginson, p. 251.

and high personal quality, including intelligence and honorable motivation.

Later in the war, the one outstanding feature they had in common was knowledge and experience, gained in training camps and battle. Gradually, a separation appeared in the quality of the individual. Through elimination of inept officers, commissioning of deserving officers from the ranks, and increased reliance on officers with Regular Army backgrounds, the caliber of the officer corps improved. At the same time, the influx of conscripts, substitute conscripts, and bounty jumpers caused a decline in quality in the enlisted ranks, for many of these men had little intelligence and motives other than honorable. General Sherman summarized this decline when he wrote that "the men who voluntarily enlisted at the outbreak of the war were the best, better than the conscript, and far better than the bought substitute."⁵⁶

Such was the nature of the human element. Its influence on leadership--and on the soldier's response--will be seen in subsequent chapters.

⁵⁶Sherman, Vol. II, p. 387.

CHAPTER III

LEADERSHIP PROBLEMS IN BUILDING THE VOLUNTEER ARMY

General

In March 1861, a month before the outbreak of the war, a former Army captain in New York published a book called Handbook for Active Service. Designed as a practical aid to citizen soldiers who might volunteer for--or be called to--active duty, it was a combination Soldier's Guide and field manual on drill and ceremonies. In his preface, the author referred to the many citizens who were members of state militias and who were "more or less accustomed to the use of arms, . . ." He wrote:

Very few have been in active service, and are therefore unaccustomed to the fatigues, and unacquainted with the duties, of camp and garrison life. Were any number of them to be brought suddenly into the field, this want of experience would be at once felt by officers as well as soldiers, and a great deal of useless labor, unnecessary privation, and personal suffering would be gone through with before they would become sufficiently accustomed to the entire change in their mode of life. . . .

The large amount of intelligence and active energy which the volunteer brings with him into the field is frequently thrown away and wasted for the want of knowledge in daily routine, . . . together with a strict obedience to order,¹

During the months following, this proved to be a prophetic piece of writing. Many a new officer, on arriving at camp, may well have asked himself, "What do I do now?"

¹Egbert L. Viele, Handbook for Active Service (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1861), pp. 7-8.

Leadership Training of Officers

Literature Studied by Officers

Official literature.--A newly-appointed brigadier general of Volunteers did, in fact, ask the advice of a young Regular Army lieutenant as to how to best become familiar with his duties. The reply was to study the Army Regulations as if it were the Bible.²

Army Regulations of 1861 contained over 500 pages of detailed information about things the new officer needed to know, including organization, administration, the Articles of War, military justice, and guard duty. Little was said directly about leadership or the art of dealing with subordinates. The Army's official philosophy of leadership, reflected in a few scattered paragraphs throughout the book, accounted for possibly 1 page of the 500. It did start on the first page, however, where there was a brief discussion of military discipline:

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2. Military authority is to be exercised with firmness, but with kindness and justice to inferiors. Punishments shall be strictly conformable to military law.

3. Superiors of every grade are forbidden to injure those under them by tyrannical or capricious conduct, or by abusive language.³

Elsewhere in the Regulations, general officers were reminded

² Jacob D. Cox, Military Reminiscences of the Civil War (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), Vol. I, p. 20.

³ U. S., War Department, Revised United States Army Regulations of 1861 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1863), p. 9.

that "if troops bivouac in presence of the enemy, the Generals bivouac with them."⁴

Regimental commanders were enjoined to "encourage useful occupations, and manly exercises and diversions among their men, and to repress dissipation and immorality."⁵

The Army's regard for its non-commissioned officers was indicated in the section of the Regulations enjoining "all officers to be cautious in reproving non-commissioned officers in the presence or hearing of privates, lest their authority be weakened; and non-commissioned officers are not to be sent to the guard-room and mixed with privates during confinement. . . ."⁶ In the section on Quartermaster matters, however, there is a minor but interesting item which appears contradictory. In a table showing the amount of quarters floor space authorized for persons of each grade while in garrison, non-commissioned officers were classified with--and were allowed the same floor space as--privates, servants, and washerwomen.⁷

In addition to the Regulations, officers studied various other military books. Probably the most widely read was Hardee's Tactics, commercially published but bearing official approval. It was actually a drill manual, for in those days drill and tactics were virtually synonymous. The bible for drill, Hardee was in the hands of every officer who could procure a copy.⁸ The complicated movements were not learned overnight. A regimental lieutenant colonel wrote in his diary

⁴Ibid., p. 82.

⁵Ibid., p. 18.

⁶Ibid., p. 19.

⁷Ibid., pp. 159-60.

⁸Cox, p. 20.

In August 1861 that "Hardee for a month or more was a book of impenetrable mysteries. The words conveyed no idea to my mind, and the movements described were utterly beyond my comprehension; but now the whole thing comes almost without study."⁹

In the rear of another semi-official manual titled Camp and Outpost Duty for Infantry was a brief section on "The Duties of Officers." Noteworthy in this section is an item that could be called a forerunner of our leadership principle "Know Your Men and Look Out for Their Welfare."¹⁰

. . . An officer should acquire such influence over his men that they will be eager to do his bidding and to follow him any where. The possession of that influence is the mark of a good officer, and it can not be acquired without a knowledge of the names of the soldiers in his company and the study of their individual characters.

.

Every thing connected with the daily life of the men should be an object of constant attention and solicitude. No detail is beneath notice. . . . The arms are the fighting weapons, but the soldier is the machine which wields them; and it is to him--to clothing and feeding him, and looking after his health and comfort--that the great attention is due. The arms and ammunition must, of course, be always in perfect order, but they are only required when in contact with an enemy.

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An officer should go among his men, and himself look after their comfort. No fear of their losing respect for him because he does so. At the end of a march, he should never feel at liberty to attend to his own wants until he has looked after his men.¹¹

⁹John Beatty, Memoirs of a Volunteer (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1946), p. 40.

¹⁰U. S., Department of the Army, Field Manual 22-100, Military Leadership, hereafter referred to as FM 22-100 (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, June 1961), pp. 29-30.

¹¹Daniel Butterfield, Camp and Outpost Duty for Infantry (New York: Harper and Bros., 1862), pp. 116-17.

The spirit of our leadership principle "Set the Example"¹² was found in this counsel:

It is the bounden duty of all officers to set a good example to their men, not only as regards general military discipline, but as regards morality and sobriety of conduct.

.....

Officers should be most scrupulous in ceremoniously returning all salutes; their failure to do so is as great an offense, almost, as the neglect to salute would be in a private soldier. . . .¹³

Other books on the officer's list were "such manuals as Mahan's works on Field Fortifications and on Outpost Duty."¹⁴ These manuals were not concerned with leadership, however.

Apparently, even those officers who had seen duty in their states' militias had been exposed to little published guidance on the handling of men. The Compend of Military Instructions, published in 1857 and issued to every officer in the Massachusetts Militia, contained only material on drill and ceremonies, tactics, and interior guard--nothing on leadership.¹⁵ The General Regulations for the Military Forces of the State of New York was a comprehensive manual dealing with organization, administration, drill and ceremonies, military justice, uniforms, etcetera. Of its 352 pages, less than 1 page dealt with the art of influencing and directing men. The following paragraph contained advice for commanders:

¹² FM 22-100, pp. 31-32.

¹³ Butterfield, pp. 114-17.

¹⁴ Cox, p. 30.

¹⁵ Ebenezer W. Stone, Compend of Military Instructions (Boston: William White, 1857).

Unanimity and good understanding amongst the officers, as connected with the character and discipline of a regiment, are objects peculiarly deserving the attention of the commanding officer. His timely interference to prevent disputes; his advice to the young and inexperienced; his protection of, and favor to the deserving; and his immediate reprehension of any conduct likely to interrupt the harmony of the corps, are the best means of securing these desirable ends, towards the attainment of which he has a right to demand, and ought to receive, the assistance of every officer. It is well known that perfect civility, and the most conciliatory manner, are compatible with the exercise of the strictest command; and it is to be observed, that the commanding officer is equally responsible for the maintenance of discipline and subordination in his regiment, whether on parade, at the mess, or in any other situation. (Italics mine.)¹⁶

Unofficial literature.--The prophetic author of the unofficial Handbook for Active Service, referred to early in this chapter, had little to offer in regard to leadership, but he did make this point concerning drill (which was to play such a big part in the new soldier's life):

An intelligent mind becomes restive under the routine of the daily drill, unless it can appreciate the object to be gained by such discipline. By setting before the volunteer the whole theory of army organization, it is believed that he will the more readily comprehend the great value of discipline in sustaining that organization, and under such impulses will arrive more rapidly at proficiency in drill, and yield a more ready obedience to orders. . . .¹⁷

Perhaps this proponent of "the reason why" would have been satisfied with the present-day title we have given to his idea: "Keep Your Men Informed."¹⁸

A pocket-size manual, unofficial but indorsed by the U. S. Military Academy, was the Army Officer's Pocket Companion and Manual

¹⁶General Regulations for the Military Forces of the State of New York (Albany: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1858), p. 7.

¹⁷Viele, p. 14.

¹⁸FM 22-100, pp. 30-31.

for Staff Officers in the Field. Three of its 300 pages on a wide range of military subjects contained a set of "General Principles" for the officer. Among them was a reminder to "know yourself": "No man is perfect. Confine yourself as much as possible to the speciality [sic] for which you have the most aptitude," ¹⁹

Closely akin to our principle "Employ Your Command in Accordance with its Capabilities" ²⁰ was the admonition to "calculate every thing, foresee every thing, organize every thing, and ascertain exactly the means at your disposal, in order to rely upon them alone.

On patience and tolerance:

A recruit, who deserts during his first engagement, may afterward become a hero. Persevering toil, practice and reflection, can in time make a good general of an indifferent officer.

On asking the advice of subordinates:

If you are commander-in-chief, never call a council of war, for in doing so you place your capacity in doubt, and destroy the reliance the army may have in you; whilst in return you only receive advice too various to be followed, and besides mostly dictated by evil feelings, jealousy, fear, & c. [sic], and every officer would be offended at your not having adopted his views.

If you are in need of the advice of your inferiors, ask for it skilfully and in an indirect manner, and reflect twice before adopting it, even if it seem judicious at first sight. ²¹

This philosophy, although not subscribed to by all Civil War commanders, is interesting because it is in variance with the modern

¹⁹William P. Craighill, The Army Officer's Pocket Companion and Manual for Staff Officers in the Field (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1862), pp. 300-301.

²⁰FM 22-100, p. 36.

²¹Craighill, pp. 299-301.

officer's training. Today's officer is educated to rely heavily on the recommendations of his staff and subordinate commanders in his decision-making processes, and he feels no need to ask advice "in an indirect manner." On the contrary, his requests for comments and recommendations are not only candid but expected. While it is true that Civil War staffs were small by today's standards²² and were often used more as reliable messengers than as advisors,²³ not all commanders made their decisions unaided. Some did, in fact, make use of the council-of-war when critical decisions were to be made, calling together their subordinate commanders, presenting the situation, asking for opinions, then taking a vote.²⁴

On relations with subordinates, the same manual's advice was: "Be . . . considerate, and above all, just toward your inferiors."²⁵

Hints to Company Officers on Their Military Duties, a pocket-size manual published for captains and lieutenants, was the nearest thing to a leadership manual found during this study. It dwelled on personal qualities which an officer was advised to develop, including

²²U. S., War Department, General Orders Affecting the Volunteer Force (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1862), pp. 13-14.

²³Theodore Lyman, Meade's Headquarters, 1863-1865, ed. George R. Agassiz (Boston: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1922), p. 121; John Gibbon, Personal Recollections of the Civil War (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1928), pp. 140, 151; Daniel Leasure, "Personal Observations and Experiences in the Pope Campaign in Virginia," Glimpses of the Nation's Struggle, ed. The Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, Minnesota Commandery (St. Paul, Minn: St. Paul Book and Stationery Co., 1887), Vol. I, p. 159.

²⁴Gibbon, pp. 142-45; Charles A. Dana, Recollections of the Civil War (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1898), pp. 97, 113.

²⁵Craighill, p. 301.

responsibility, character, dignity, thoroughness, punctuality, and valor. It urged the officer to instill in his men the habit of saving money for the future²⁶--also the habit of being prompt at roll call, guardmounting, drill, and dress parade:

The captain will instruct them that the great thing in this matter is habit. If they become slow, negligent or tardy in such duties, they will be behindhand when needed to form a line of battle against the enemy.²⁷

The captain was informed that it was his duty to inspect the mess daily "to see that everything is neat, and the cooking well done."²⁸ He was reminded that "punishments should not result, nor even appear to result, from a spirit of resentment or revenge."²⁹ He was told that the general practice of imposing extra guard duty as a punishment was wrong, that guard was an honorable duty to be performed only by men in good standing.³⁰ He was given advice which today would be discussed under the leadership principle "Be Technically and Tactically Proficient."³¹ Specifically, he was told, the captain must study. Further, in this regard:

To understand the tactics as he ought, he must apply himself as a student: There is no escape from diligent study but in disgrace. To be a bungler in company or battalion manoeuvres [sic] forfeits confidence in his military capacity, There is no profession in which incapacity is so severely criticized--and deservedly so--as the military.³²

²⁶ C. C. Andrews, Hints to Company Officers on Their Military Duties (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1864), pp. 44-45.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 47-48.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 25.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 34.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 35-36.

³¹ Ft. 22-100, p. 27.

³² Ibid., pp. 11-12. The author goes on to say that "a captain should be something of a musician. There are forty-eight bugle calls which he is required to know; and those used to signal skirmishers he is enjoined to be able to execute on the bugle himself." At first

Regarding officer-enlisted relationships, the captain is advised that he should be "kind and affable toward his men."³³

Leadership Instruction

There is no evidence of officers having received any formal instruction in the art of leadership or in any phase of the handling of men other than drill. Officers' night schools were established in the regiments for instruction in drill, outpost duty, reconnaissance, and other tactical subjects.³⁴ One officer's diary account tells of a division commander, a former Regular Army officer, summoning the officers of the division for his lectures and instruction in tactical subjects: "During these exercises we rode fifteen to twenty miles and listened to at least twenty speeches. I learned something, and am learning a little each day."³⁵ How much leadership training was integrated into such instruction is not known. To what extent the general and other instructors used their lectures to imbue in their officers a sense of responsibility as leaders can only be a matter of conjecture.

During mobilization, some Regular Army officers were detailed to the staffs of training camps to aid in the training of the Volunteer

glance, this appears to be an item of trivia which ceased to be of practical value with the passing of the bugle. Yet it gives rise to the thought that in today's Army it is no less prudent for a commander to know how to operate his own radio.

³³Ibid., p. 54.

³⁴Cox, p. 25; Beatty, p. 77; C. C. Andrews, "The Surrender of the Third Regiment, Minnesota Volunteer Infantry," Glimpses of the Nation's Struggle, p. 341.

³⁵Beatty, p. 77.

regiments. They functioned primarily as inspectors, and to accompany them on their inspections was undoubtedly--for the Volunteer officer--a lesson in leadership, unit management, and how to inspect. It was also, sometimes, a blow to his pride and inspired in him no affection for the Regular Army officer. One Volunteer regimental commander, a veteran of the painful experience, recognized it as an opportunity to learn, and he counseled his fellow officers to swallow their pride and take the same outlook:

No doubt it is a trying ordeal to have some young regular-army lieutenant ride up to your tent at an hour's notice, and leisurely devote a day to probing every weak spot in your command,--to stand by while he smells at every camp-kettle, detects every delinquent gun-sling, ferrets out old shoes from behind the mess-bunks, spies out every tent-pole not labelled with the sergeant's name, asks to see the cash-balance of every company-fund, and perplexes your best captain on forming from two ranks into one by the left flank. Yet it is just such unpleasant processes as these which are the salvation of an army; these petty mortifications are the fulcrum by which you can lift your whole regiment to a first-class rank, if you have only the sense to use them. So long as no inspecting officer needs twice to remind you of the same thing, you have no need to blush. But though you be the bravest of the brave, though you know a thousand things of which he is utterly ignorant, yet so long as he can tell you one thing which you ought to know, he is master of the situation. He may be the most conceited little popinjay who ever strutted in uniform; no matter; it is more for your interest to learn than for his to teach. Let our volunteer officers, as a body, once resolve to act on this principle, and we shall have such an army as the world never saw. But nothing costs the nation a price so fearful, in money or in men, as the false pride which shrinks from these necessary surgical operations, or regards the surgeon as a foe. . . . (Italics mine.)³⁶

³⁶Thomas Wentworth Higginson, "Thomas Wentworth Higginson Explains the Value of Trained Officers," The Blue and the Gray, ed. Henry Steele Commager (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950), Vol. I, pp. 485-86.

Achieving Discipline

Obstacles

We have seen that, during the recruiting period of 1861 and early 1862, the new officer's main problem was that he knew little more about the military profession than his men, and sometimes not as much. It was a case of "the blind leading the blind."

Another major problem confronting him was that before discipline could be achieved, "the existing equality between officers and enlisted men had to be destroyed."³⁷ This was to be no easy task in regiments where companies (including the officers) were made up of men who had held similar jobs in the same cities--men with like backgrounds and much in common. One company, for example, was comprised of printers and was known as the "Printers' Company."³⁸ In one training camp there were several companies made up of college students who had enlisted together and had elected their professors their officers.³⁹

General John Gibbon, an officer with a Regular Army background and who commanded a Volunteer brigade during this period, recognized what needed to be done and knew the obstacles, and he pointed out that sometimes the relationship between officers and men was even closer than that of men who had merely worked at the same job:

In a company raised, perhaps, in some country village, where all of its members from the captain down, had been intimately associated from boyhood, it was at once necessary

³⁷Gibbon, p. 15.

³⁸John M. Paver, What I Saw from 1861 to 1865: Personal Recollections of John M. Paver (Indianapolis: Scott-Miller Co., n.d.), pp. 20, 65.

³⁹Cox, p. 33.

to build that wall which, in a regular army, separates the commissioned officer from the enlisted man. This was not a little complicated by the fact that in such a mass of raw material, it not infrequently happened that brothers, fathers, and sons were serving in the same company, the son, perhaps, being senior to his father!⁴⁰

The leading service journal of the day, in an article on care and discipline of troops, agreed that home associations were one deterrent to discipline but added another--the inability to command:

In connection with the subject of forming good cadres, it may be remarked that, beside ignorance of their duties, two great obstacles impede the efficiency of officers and non-commissioned officers of volunteer regiments as regards the enforcement of discipline. 1st. Home associations. They are embarrassed by their former relations with the men. They dislike to report them or find fault. In short, they look to a future accountability on returning to their native place. 2d. Very many of them cannot command. It is always expostulation or threatening, "Please go," or, "If you don't, I'll knock you down."⁴¹

A regimental commander, himself a citizen-soldier, also decried the Volunteer officer's reluctance to impose discipline, but he also understood it:

In many cases there is really no more difference between officers and men, in education or in breeding, than if the one class were chosen by lot from the other; all are from the same neighborhood, all will return to the same civil pursuits side by side; every officer knows that in a little while each soldier will again become his client or his customer, his constituent or his rival. Shall he risk offending him for life in order to carry out some hobby of stricter discipline? (*Italics mine.*)⁴²

It was brought out earlier that there was no intermingling of Regulars and Volunteers in the Union regiments. While the decision to

⁴⁰Gibbon, p. 12.

⁴¹Editorial, "The Care and Discipline of Troops," Army and Navy Journal (New York) October 8, 1864, p. 100.

⁴²Higginson, The Blue and the Gray, p. 484.

preserve unit integrity in the Regular Army undoubtedly served to also preserve morale and esprit de corps, it cost the Volunteer army heavily. It deprived the Volunteer units of an experienced cadre to form a nucleus of a military organization--cadremen who would have known how to quickly "build that wall" and who could have shown the way for the citizen-officer. In regard to the Regular Army officers, none of whom during the first year were permitted to command Volunteer units, General Schofield wrote:

Nowhere in the world could have been found a better corps of officers to organize, instruct, and discipline new troops. Yet those officers were hardly employed at all in that service at first, when it was of supreme importance.⁴³

The discipline-building process may have suffered equally as much from the lack of an experienced non-commissioned cadre. With the exception of the previous-service men mentioned earlier, there were no old Army sergeants to run things while the new colonels and captains watched, listened, and learned. Fortunate, indeed, was the commander who did have one or two of those former sergeants. Schofield expressed pity for the Volunteer officers with no old sergeants to help them: "No country ought to be so cruel to its soldiers as that."⁴⁴

Lack of an experienced cadre was not the last of the obstacles to discipline. Again, General Gibbon got to the heart of the problem when he wrote:

One of my greatest difficulties was in teaching the sentinels their duties, especially in prevailing upon them to walk their posts constantly, keep a sharp lookout and salute

⁴³ John M. Schofield, Forty-Six Years in the Army (New York: The Century Co., 1897), p. 514.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 18.

all officers as they passed by them. Men who had been working hard all their lives for a purpose could see no use in pacing up and down doing nothing. (*Italics mine.*)⁴⁵

Actions

With so many obstacles in the way, how could discipline ever be instilled in the new soldier?

Drill and more drill.--A good part of the answer is found in a letter written to a friend by a young volunteer while in training camp in October 1861:

I commenced writing yesterday, but was obliged to stop to attend drill, a very common incident in soldier life. The first thing in the morning is drill, then drill, then drill again. Then drill, drill, a little more drill. Then drill, and lastly, drill. Between drills, we drill, and sometimes stop to eat a little and have a roll-call.⁴⁶

The young man was hardly exaggerating, for, throughout the war, drill was the primary means of developing and maintaining the "habitual, automatic obedience to command" which is essential to discipline.⁴⁷ In training camps throughout the North, regiments "drilled incessantly,"⁴⁸ and "the hills rang from one end to the other with . . . sharp commands. . . ." At first, the commands were from company officers and non-commissioned officers. Then, as the companies became proficient--and when the field [grade] officers had read Hardee enough to know what to do--drill progressed to regimental and brigade level. Some division

⁴⁵Gibbon, p. 36.

⁴⁶Oliver Willcox Norton, Army Letters, 1861-1865 (Chicago: O. L. Deming, 1903), p. 28.

⁴⁷Andrews, Glimpses of the Nation's Struggle, p. 341; Viele, p. 14.

⁴⁸Henry Murray Calvert, Reminiscences of a Boy in Blue (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1920), pp. 17, 19.

commanders drilled their entire divisions as units.⁴⁹ Officers' drill was held also, consisting primarily of sword exercise.⁵⁰

Drill probably had even greater practical battlefield application then than now, for those were still the days of close battlefield formations. The science of weaponry had not advanced to the point of requiring the battlefield dispersion which is essential today. Large units were controlled in battle through the execution of movements directed by bugle, drum, and voice. These movements are found in Hardee's drill manuals and were learned on the drill fields of training camps. In essence, the drill of that period would be recognized today as a combination of dismounted drill, bayonet training, and battle drill.⁵¹

Experienced drill masters were scarce, and commanders sought out volunteers with previous military training, including former students in military schools.⁵² To have served in the war in Mexico in 1847 was a "sure passport to confidence."⁵³ One regiment of cavalry considered itself fortunate in finding a "perfect regimental drill-master" in a lieutenant colonel formerly of the Italian army--one of those soldiers of fortune discussed earlier.⁵⁴

⁴⁹George T. Stevens, Three Years in the Sixth Corps (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1870), pp. 10-11; U. S., War Department, The War of the Rebellion: Official Records (Washington, D. C., 1880-1901), Series I, Vol. XII, Part I, p. 91.

⁵⁰Cox, p. 29.

⁵¹W. J. Hardee, Rifle and Light Infantry Tactics: An Abstract for the Recruit (New York: Published at No. 1 Maiden Lane, 1861); W. J. Hardee, Rifle and Light Infantry Tactics (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo & Co., 1855), Vol. II.

⁵²Gibbon, p. 415.

⁵³Cox, p. 14.

⁵⁴Calvert, pp. 16-17.

In regard to the lack of qualified drill instructors, a brigade commander, formerly of the Regular Army, likened himself to a head teacher with several thousand scholars and only a few assistants who knew "even the A. B. C. of the subject to be taught." During drills, when the regimental commanders knew nothing of the drill to be performed, he sometimes did the unorthodox and took command of their regiments himself. He stated it was wonderful to see "how eagerly my explanations were listened to by both officers and men, and how intelligently the commands were executed." Slowly but surely, drill and discipline improved.⁵⁵

Some examples.--Letters, diaries, and memoirs provide examples of various techniques used by commanders to establish discipline during the formative months of the Volunteer army.

A division commander, apparently experiencing the same concern as General Gibbon in regard to discipline on guard duty, went to each regiment, had the regimental commander form it into a square, and gave it a twenty minute address on guard duty; "throwing in here and there patriotic expressions which encouraged and delighted the boys very much. When he departed they gave him three rousing cheers."⁵⁶

There are numerous accounts of mutiny, for it was a common disciplinary problem early in the war. Commanders' reactions to it provide an interesting insight into their personal philosophies of leadership. The no-nonsense philosophy was held by a new Volunteer colonel, a political appointee who eventually rose to the command of

⁵⁵Gibbon, pp. 30-31.

⁵⁶Beatty, p. 72.

an army. When informed that part of his regiment had mutinied and stacked their arms, he exclaimed, "Stack arms! The devil they have!" Then he had the four companies not involved in the mutiny load their muskets and stand over the mutinous troops "whom he compelled to stack and unstack arms for twelve hours."⁵⁷

Following is an extract from the diary of a Volunteer lieutenant colonel, commander of an Ohio regiment in January, 1862:

January 5. General Mitchel [division commander] has issued an immense number of orders, and of course holds the commandants of regiments responsible for their execution. I have, as in duty bound, done my best to enforce them, and the men think me unnecessarily severe.

Today a soldier, about half drunk, was arrested for leaving camp without permission and brought to my quarters; he had two canteens of whisky on his person. I remonstrated with him mildly, but he grew saucy, insubordinate, and finally insolent and insulting; he said he did not care a damn for what I thought or did, and was ready to go to the guardhouse--in fact wanted to go there. Finally becoming exasperated, I took the canteens from him, poured out the whisky, and directed Captain Patterson to strap him to a tree until he cooled off somewhat. The captain failing in his efforts to fasten him securely, I took my saddle girth, backed him up to the tree, buckled him to it, and returned to my quarters. This proved to be the last straw that broke the unfortunate camel's back. It was a highhanded outrage upon the person of a volunteer soldier, the last and worst of the many arbitrary and severe acts of which I had been guilty. The regiment seemed to arise en masse and, led on by a few reckless men who had long disliked me, advanced with threats and fearful oaths toward my tent. The bitter hatred that the men entertained for me had now culminated. It being Sunday the whole regiment was off duty, and while some, and perhaps many, of the boys had no desire to resort to violent measures, yet all evidently sympathized with the prisoner and regarded my action as arbitrary and cruel. The position of the soldier was a humiliating one, but it gave him no bodily pain. Possibly I had no authority for punishing him in this way; and had I taken time for reflection it is more than probably I should have found some other and less objectionable mode; confinement in the guardhouse, however, would

⁵⁷William F. G. Shanks, Personal Recollections of Distinguished Generals (New York: Harper & Bros., 1886), p. 308.

have been no punishment for such a man; on the contrary it would have afforded him that relief from disagreeable duty which he desired. At any rate the act, whether right or wrong, had been done, and I must either stand by it now or abandon all hope of controlling the regiment hereafter.

I watched the mob, unobserved by it, from an opening in my tent door; saw it gather, consult, advance, and could hear the boisterous and threatening language very plainly. Buckling my pistol belt under my coat where it could not be seen, I stepped out just as the leaders advanced to the tree for the purpose of releasing the man. I asked them very quietly what they proposed to do. Then I explained to them how the soldier had violated orders, which I was bound by my oath to enforce; how, when I undertook to remonstrate kindly against such unsoldierly conduct, he had insulted and defied me. Then I continued as calmly as I ever spoke: "I understand you have come here to untie him; let the man who desires to undertake the work begin. If there be a dozen men here who have it in their minds to do this thing, let them step forward--I dare them to do it." They saw before them a quiet, plain man who was ready to die if need be; they could not doubt his honesty of purpose. He gave them time to act and answer; they stood irresolute and silent; with a wave of the hand he bade them go to their quarters, and they went.

General Mitchel hearing of my trouble sent for me. I explained to him the difficulties under which I was laboring, told him what I had done and why I had done it. He said he understood my position fully, that I must go ahead, do my duty and he would stand by me and, if necessary, sustain me with his whole division. I replied that I needed no assistance, that the officers, with but few exceptions were my friends, and that I believed there were enough good, sensible soldiers in the regiment to see me through. He talked very kindly to me; but I feel greatly discouraged. . . . Very many of these soldiers think they should be allowed to work when they please, play when they please, and in short do as they please. Until this idea is expelled from their minds the regiment will be but little better than a mob. (*Italics mine.*)⁵⁸

About a month later, the colonel, still having troubles, received a letter which he felt important enough to mention in his diary:

February 8. One of the color guards, an honest, sensible, good-looking boy, has written me a letter of encouragement.

⁵⁸ Beatty, pp. 74-76.

I trust that soon all will feel as kindly toward me
as he.⁵⁹

Colonel Isaac I. Stevens, a former Regular Army officer who had resigned to return to civil life, had, in August 1861, offered his services to the Union and had been accepted. He had been commissioned a colonel and given command of the 79th Highlanders, New York Volunteers. When he joined the regiment it was still licking its wounds from the First Battle of Bull Run, in which it had suffered heavy losses, including the death of the regimental commander. The officers and noncommissioned officers had petitioned the Secretary of War to allow the regiment to return to New York to recruit replacements and recuperate. Secretary Stanton, "in consideration of the gallant services of the 79th Regiment, and of their losses in battle," had agreed. When Colonel Stevens arrived, the troops were eagerly preparing for the trip home, although by now they were becoming restless and insubordinate because of the delay in receiving orders. Unknown to them or their officers, the Secretary had revoked his order on advice of military authorities who felt allowing one regiment to go home would have a bad effect on other troops. The troops of the regiment were never informed of the revocation, but when Colonel Stevens issued orders to move the camp to another location, their suspicions were confirmed. The men told the colonel "how they had been deceived and disappointed," and all but two companies refused to strike tents.

Colonel Stevens urged them not to bring disgrace upon their regiment, but to no avail. The colonel then reported the mutiny to

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 82. It is not known whether the young soldier was, in fact, honest, sensible, and good-looking, or whether he seemed to take on these qualities because he was on the colonel's side.

his superiors and asked for troops to suppress it. Soon the camp was surrounded by a force of regular infantry, artillery, and cavalry--all with weapons loaded and sabres drawn. Then, standing in the midst of the camp, he addressed the mutinous troops:

I know you have been deceived. You have been told you were to go to your homes, when no such orders had been given. But you are soldiers and your duty is to obey. I am your Colonel, and your obedience is due to me. I am a soldier of the regular army. I have spent many years on the frontier fighting the Indians. I have been surrounded by the red devils, fighting for my scalp. I have been a soldier in the war with Mexico, and bear honorable wounds received in battle, and have been in far greater danger than that surrounding me now. All the morning I have begged you to do your duty. Now I shall order you; and if you hesitate to obey instantly, my next order will be to those troops to fire upon you. Soldiers of the 79th Highlanders, fall in!

"His voice rang out like a trumpet. The men, thoroughly cowed, made haste to fall into the ranks. . . ." Some of the ringleaders were courtmartialed, imprisoned for six months, then returned to the regiment.⁶⁰

One can hardly help but find much to admire in the colonel for acknowledging that the men did have a grievance, while at the same time remaining calm, resolute, and utterly confident in his manner. Yet one can hardly help wondering whether there was an element of bluff in his threat, or whether he would have actually given the order to fire.

Colonel Stevens set about to establish discipline in his regiment, and he did it with a firm hand. "He enforced early roll-calls, hard drilling, and strict cleanliness in person and camp. . . . He

⁶⁰ Hazard Stevens, The Life of Isaac Ingalls Stevens (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1901), Vol. II, pp. 321-26.

promptly and severely punished every neglect of duty," but at the same time he took measures to vary the monotony of camp life and set up a system of furloughs and promotions. In regard to his officers:

He was especially strict with the officers, taught them to assert their authority, and broke up the time-honored habit, the curse of militia organizations, of deferring to, and hobnobbing with, the rank and file.⁶¹

Not infrequently, the personal conduct of officers themselves, rather than external circumstances, was at the root of the lack of discipline. For example, there was the recruit who wrote that "the Captain just came and wanted to put me in the Kitchen [sic] again but I got excused for I don't like the business." (The captain and the recruit were from the same village.)⁶² There were the senior officers of a regiment in training camp who took comfortable quarters in a hotel in the town about a mile away, and the company officers who--learning by example--followed suit, "leaving their commands, except at times of drill and parade."⁶³ There was the situation General Gibbon found when he assumed command of a brigade:

It was not long before I discovered that reveille was a mere farce which none of the officers attended. An order was issued requiring the whole command to turn out under arms and as soon as reveille ceased beating companies were to move out at a double quick, form on the colors and remain until dismissed by me. The horses of myself and staff were brought up and saddled and as the drums ceased beating I started at a gallop round through the camp, saw that each regiment was promptly formed and dismissed it. They soon learned to form promptly and regiments vied with each other to see which could be most promptly

⁶¹Ibid., p. 326.

⁶²Leo W. and John I. Faller, Dear Folks at Home (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: The Telegraphic Press, 1963), pp. 8-9.

⁶³Paver, P. 24.

on the line. The privates were delighted with the order and remarks were overheard that "now the officers had to turn out just as the men. . . ." ⁶⁴

General Hooker, when he was a brigade commander, also inspected at an early hour, and "summoned officers that were absent, or sleeping in their tents, to drill their commands." ⁶⁵

In the following account, Brigadier General Jacob Cox, citizen-soldier and brigade commander, describes an incident of mutiny--or insubordination, at the least--among a group of his officers. He had recently assumed command of the brigade, and it was on the march toward its first combat action. He describes his handling of the situation and reveals his philosophy of leadership:

Our first night's encampment [on the march] was about eleven miles above Charleston in a lovely nook between spurs of the hills. Here I was treated to a surprise on the part of three of my subordinates which was an unexpected enlargement of my military experience. The camp had got nicely arranged for the night and supper was over when these gentlemen waited upon me at my tent. The one who had shown the least capacity as a commander of a regiment was spokesman, and informed me that after consultation they had concluded that it was foolhardy to follow the Confederates into the gorge we were travelling, and that unless I could show them satisfactory reasons for changing their opinion they would not lead their commands further into it.

I dryly asked if he was quite sure he understood the nature of his communication. There was something probably in the tone of my question which was not altogether expected, and his companions began to look a little uneasy. He then protested that none of them meant any disrespect, but that as their military experience was about as extensive as my own, they thought I ought to make no movements but on consultation with them and by their consent. The others seemed to be better pleased with this way of putting it, and signified assent. My answer was that their conduct very plainly showed

⁶⁴Gibbon, p. 36.

⁶⁵Henry M. Blake, Three Years in the Army of the Potomac (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1865), pp. 33-34.

their own lack both of military experience and elementary military knowledge, and that this ignorance was the only thing which could palliate their action. Whether they meant it or not, their action was mutinous. The responsibility for the movement of the army was with me, and whilst I should be inclined to confer very freely with my principal subordinates and explain my purposes, I should call no councils of war, and submit nothing to vote till I felt incompetent to decide for myself. If they apologized for their conduct and showed earnestness in military obedience to orders, what they had now said would be overlooked, but on any recurrence of cause for complaint I should enforce my power by the arrest of the offender at once. I dismissed them with this, and immediately sent out the formal orders through my adjutant-general to march early next morning.

Before they slept one of the three had come to me with earnest apology for his part in the matter, and a short time made them all as subordinate as I could wish. The incident . . . was a not unnatural result of the sudden assembling of inexperienced men under a brigade commander of whom they knew nothing except that at the beginning of the war he was a civilian like themselves. These very men afterward became devoted followers, and some of them life-long friends. It was part of their military education as well as mine. If I had been noisy and blustering in my intercourse with them at the beginning, and had done what seemed to be regarded as the "regulation" amount of cursing and swearing, they would probably have given me credit for military aptitude at least; but a systematic adherence to a quiet and undemonstrative manner evidently told against me, at first, in their opinion.

Through my army life I met more or less of the same conduct when assigned to a new command; but when men learned that discipline would be inevitably enforced, and that it was as necessary to obey a quiet order as one emphasized by expletives, and especially when they had been a little under fire, there was no more trouble. Indeed, I was impressed with the fact that after this acquaintance was once made, my chief embarrassment in discipline was that an intimation of dissatisfaction on my part would cause deeper chagrin and more evident pain than I intended or wished. (*Italics mine.*)⁶⁶

In analyzing this affair, it seems reasonable to look upon it as a situation in which a group of subordinate commanders felt leaderless. Their lack of knowledge of their new commander and his abilities--

⁶⁶Cox, pp. 74-76.

and his apparently mild and unassertive manner--had deprived him of their confidence. And to add to their apprehension, he was about to take them into their first action against the enemy. But when they confronted him with their proposal for "command by committee," he became the authoritarian, and he startled them with his confidence and strength. Shamed though they were, one can almost hear their sighs of relief. They had a leader after all.

General Cox learned, the hard way, a point that today is stressed in the leadership manual The Armed Forces Officer: that "a firm hold at the beginning pays ten-fold the dividend of a timid approach, followed by a show of firmness later on."⁶⁷ However, his thesis that a new commander should initially gain the confidence of his command by adopting a "noisy and blustering" demeanor with the "regulation amount of cursing and swearing" is an interesting one. It is in conflict with the leadership literature discussed earlier, where it was suggested that "perfect civility, and the most conciliatory manner, are compatible with the exercise of the strictest command."⁶⁸ Further, research reveals no other commander's express recommendation of this technique. Perhaps the modern officer will accept the middle-of-the-road approach as the most appropriate--a firm, confident manner (even though he may have to "fake it" a bit), but without the noise and bluster.

⁶⁷U. S., Department of Defense, The Armed Forces Officer (Washington: U. S. Printing Office, 1950), p. 153.

⁶⁸See p. 30.

Summary

It has been found, then, that the new Volunteer officer acquired his leadership training through--

- 1) Study of available literature on the subject--mostly unofficial literature.
- 2) On-the-job instruction. (Little or no formal instruction was available.)
- 3) Corrections made by superiors.
- 4) Trial and error.

The major obstacles to discipline were--

- 1) Prior relationships of officers and men.
- 2) Officers' inability to command, due to lack of training and experience.
- 3) Lack of experienced cadres.
- 4) The soldier's inability to see any useful purpose in discipline and his resistance to duties which made no sense to him.

Drill was the primary means of establishing discipline. In other day-to-day efforts to instill discipline, commanders sometimes found that the reason for poor discipline among the troops was poor discipline among the officers.

Certain advice given to officers in the literature of the period is notable because of its recurrence. An example of this is the guidance offered by various writers in regard to personal relationships between the leader and the led. The following chapter will deal with those relationships as they actually existed.

CHAPTER IV

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

General

A comprehensive discourse on leadership defies organization. To illustrate: Morale, discipline, and esprit are all so interrelated that it is impossible to neatly arrange each into a compartment (or chapter) which will stand completely on its own. The same holds true with regard to personal relationships.

So this chapter tells only part of the story of the man-to-man relationships that existed between officers and men and among the officers themselves. The rest of the story is in other chapters and will be complete only when the last chapter is complete.

Between Officers and Enlisted Men

Kindness, Courtesy, and Compassion

Some officers were "arrogant, insolent, and domineering" and thought enlisted men had no rights which they were bound to respect, "no feelings or sensibilities to be recognized."¹ However, the great preponderance of evidence shows that such officers were in the minority. The majority treated enlisted men with respect. Many

¹Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, War Papers, Commandery of the State of Wisconsin (Milwaukee: Burdick, Armitage & Allen, 1896), Vol. II, p. 74.

were--in varying degrees and each in his own way--notably kind, courteous, and compassionate in personal confrontations with the individual soldier.

Colonel Joshua Chamberlain (successful combat leader who later, as General Chamberlain, was in charge of the surrender proceedings at Appomattox) was praised by a private in his regiment who wrote that the colonel "had, by his uniform kindness and courtesy, his skill and brilliant courage, endeared himself to all his men, and had done much to give his regiment [the 20th Maine Volunteers] that enviable reputation it has since enjoyed."² Colonel Chamberlain, himself, revealed some of his "sympathy of soldiership" when he wrote of his actions one night during a respite in battle:

Who could sleep, or who would? Our position was isolated and exposed. Officers must be on the alert with their command. But the human took the mastery of the official; sympathy of soldiership. Command could be devolved; but pity, not. So with a staff officer I sallied forth to see what we could do where the helpers seemed so few. Taking some observations in order not to lose the bearing of our own position, we guided our steps by the most piteous of the cries. Our part was but little; to relieve a painful posture; to give a cooling draught to fevered; to compress a severed artery, as we had learned to do, though in bungling fashion; to apply a rude bandage, which yet might prolong the life to saving; to take a token of farewell message for some stricken home; it was but little yet it was an endless task. (Italics mine.)³

At Gettysburg, the human again took mastery of the official. In the 20th Maine, several weeks before the Battle of Gettysburg, a sergeant was reduced to the ranks for refusal to obey an order he

²Theodore Gerrish, Army Life: A Private's Reminiscences of the Civil War (Portland, Maine: Hoyt, Fogg & Donham, 1882), p. 122.

³Joshua L. Chamberlain, "Night on the Field of Fredericksburg," The Blue and the Gray, ed. Henry Steele Commager (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950), Vol. I, p. 247.

considered improper. He felt wronged and deeply disgraced, although he spoke little about it. Later, at Gettysburg, he was among the first to fall. During a lull in the battle, Colonel Chamberlain was sent for. He knelt by the soldier, who whispered, "I was disgraced." From the colonel: "You are now exonerated, and promoted to a sergeancy." A witness wrote, in the dramatic style of the day, that "a sweet smile [then] played upon the wan features; a look of satisfaction came to the hungry eyes, and he was dead."⁴ From such things the colonel's legend was made.

Another commander's sensitivity toward the suffering of his soldiers is reflected in the diary of a Volunteer brigade commander:

Sammy Snyder lay on the field wounded; as I handed him my canteen he said: "General, I did my duty." "I know that, Sammy; I never doubted that you would do your duty." The most painful recollection to one who has gone through a battle is that of the friends lying wounded and dying and who needed so much when you were utterly powerless to help them.⁵

At least on the part of some officers, regard for the individual was unaffected by rise to higher rank. A regimental chaplain wrote that he was awakened at midnight on the stormy Christmas night of 1864 by a mounted orderly with a note from the division commander

The General said he was sorry to call me out on such a night, but he had just received orders to shoot a deserter the next morning, and he could not bear to have the poor

⁴Gerrish, p. 70.

⁵John Beatty, Memoirs of a Volunteer (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1946), p. 253.

fellow hurried out of the world without a word of counsel or prayer; and therefore he had sent for me to come and see him, knowing I would be glad to do what I could in such a case.⁶

A captain, commanding a Volunteer company, recounted an incident which occurred at the end of a long day's march and which obviously left him impressed:

When the company arrived at Harrison's Landing, two men, who had only two pieces of tent, went to the forest to obtain a shelter from the storm, and occupied the ground which had been selected by a brigadier-general for his headquarters.

"What are you doing here?" he asked, when he noticed them.

"We were going to fasten this canvas to the boughs, but didn't know that you were here," one of the privates replied, as they started to walk away.

"You can stay here: this is my place; but I can move to the right," he said; and ordered the pioneers to pitch his tent in another spot.

The captain had apparently seen less commendable conduct on the part of other general officers, for he went on to say that "this gallant officer, who recognized soldiers as human beings, displayed a kindness that was seldom exhibited by his peers."⁷

The simplicity and affectionate nature of the Negro soldier was brought out in chapter II, "The Leader and the Led."⁸ Officers in colored units soon learned their jobs were much easier if they were liked, and the colored soldiers liked any officers who treated them with courtesy. A regimental commander wrote that "an officer of

⁶H. Clay Trumbull, War Memoirs of a Chaplain (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898), p. 188.

⁷Henry N. Blake, Three Years in the Army of the Potomac (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1865), pp. 114-15.

⁸See p. 23.

polished manners can wind them around his finger, while white soldiers seem rather to prefer a certain roughness."⁹

Then there was the affair of the heart, in which Cupid and a cavalry sergeant were given a helping hand by an understanding captain. The sergeant was about to go out on a raid, during operations in Tennessee, when he learned a letter had arrived from his sweetheart. However, it was being held for him by a mutual acquaintance who lived about six miles from the camp. In his dilemma, he put his case before his troop commander, whose reply was, "Well, Sergeant, I want you all the time, but I'll give you two hours; take two picked men with you and see that your revolvers are loaded, there are bushwhackers about. Good luck!"¹⁰

Interviews

Interviews between officers and subordinates, whether initiated by the former or the latter, often concerned matters of small importance, but revealed much about the nature of personal relationships.

Approachability was a quality soldiers admired in an officer, and a number of officers--some West Pointers, some nonprofessionals--

⁹Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Army Life in a Black Regiment (Boston: Lee and Shepard, Publishers, 1882), p. 29. Regarding the comment that white soldiers preferred "a certain roughness": The bulk of enlisted men's comments suggest that it was firmness--rather than roughness--which the soldier appreciated in an officer, and that this firmness was appreciated all the more when it was administered with kindness, fairness, and courtesy. Gentlemanliness in an officer was admired rather than looked upon as a sign of weakness.

¹⁰Henry Murray Calvert, Reminiscences of a Boy in Blue (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1920), pp. 286-87. The sergeant got his letter. In his account of the affair, he failed to indicate what effect his captain's indulgence had on his morale as he departed on the raid, but perhaps only the callous of heart need ask.

were singled out for praise in this respect. Brigadier General George Meade, before his rise to command of the Army of the Potomac, was described by a private in his brigade as "a splendid brigadier-general. . . . When he gives a command on drill it makes every man jump, but if a private goes to him he will listen to him and talk to him as soon as he would to an officer."¹¹ Of Brigadier General "Fighting Joe" Hooker, then also a brigade commander, a Volunteer captain had this to say:

Unlike Generals M'Dowell and Franklin, who always exhibited towards subalterns, and especially enlisted men, the most supercilious bearing, the brigadier listened to every person--the drummer-boy or the colonel of a regiment--with such candor and sincerity that he quickly acquired their confidence.¹²

However, in marked contrast to the attitudes of these mature and experienced officers is the rather giddy and light-hearted outlook shown by a young Volunteer second lieutenant. In his second month in uniform, he apparently felt little sense of responsibility and made joke of his new-found power. His letter to Cousin Lou tells the story:

Oh! Ah! Here come about twenty-five men or more with complaints, and as the Captain is away, I must straighten up, and play the part of Magistrate. Oh Olympian Jove! Oh Daniel risen to the judgment! The malcontents have been severally coaxed, wheedled, threatened, and sent about their business, and the Centurion is once again at leisure. A pleasant thing is this exercise of power, especially when commands can be given in the quietest manner possible, and yet to feel that from your judgment there can be no appeal.

¹¹ Leo W. and John I. Faller, Dear Folks at Home (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: The Telegraphic Press, 1963), p. 71.

¹² Blake, pp. 33-34.

In fact, dear Cousin Lou, imagine me when the Captain is away, performing the paternal function towards some hundred grown up children. Ah me! I am growing venerable and cares are weighing heavily upon me. (*Italics mine.*)¹³

Of quite a different nature was the visit to his colonel's tent by a soldier in the 31st Illinois Volunteers. "Sol," one of those robust, hard-working, and rough-hewn volunteers in the Army of the West, had never really learned the proper deference due an officer. It had taken him and his comrades some time to learn to address an officer by his rank. Even so, they often greeted Colonel Logan by his first name. And why shouldn't they? Hadn't they all been old friends back in Franklin County? So when Sol went to the Colonel's tent, looking much depressed, he gave an awkward salute and said:

"John, I have got to go home, but I swear I will be back in three days." Colonel Logan replied: "What has happened?" "Sol" took out of his pocket a much-blurred and tear-stained letter and said: "Just read that, and you will not refuse to let me go." This was the letter from his wife:

My Dear Sol:

For God sake do come home. I am sick. There is nothing in the house to live on. I can't do a dam thing with the children. The cows got in, and ate up the garden, and everything has gone to the devil and you jist have to come.

Your loving wife,
Amanda

Loosing control of his amusement as he read the letter, the Colonel said:

"Now, Sol, you know I can not grant you a leave. You know that the reasons your wife gives for wanting you to come would look badly if I sent them up to headquarters. Besides, we are likely to be ordered to the front any day,

¹³William Chittenden Lusk, War Letters of William Thomson Lusk (New York: By the Author), pp. 63-64.

and you would hate to have it said you were absent from the regiment." Sol replied: "Now, John, do you really think there is any chance for a fight?" Colonel Logan replied: "Yes." "Then no furlough for me," said Sol.¹⁴

Colonel Logan's political inclinations may be an explanation for his reluctance to insist on greater observance of military courtesy. Sol and other men of the regiment had been his constituents during his term as Congressman, and were to be so again after the war when he entered the Senate. However, at least his denial of Sol's leave request is to his credit, since it may have cost him a vote.

One commander unconcerned about his popularity or his caller's vote was the general who looked up from his desk to be greeted by a strange private and a cheery "Good morning, General." The young, green volunteer, a mounted messenger, later recalled the incident:

The General was sitting at his desk writing when I walked up to him, with my cap on, without my belt or anything to indicate that I was on duty, and said, "Good morning, General," in a familiar way. He at once flew into a rage, and exclaimed, "Who are you? Take off your cap! Stand at attention!"

I handed him a dispatch; he acknowledged its receipt on the envelope, and then informed me that whenever I entered an officer's quarters again, unless I had my side-arms or belt on, to show that I was on duty, to uncover and stand at attention until recognized. His words and manner made an impression upon me that I shall never forget, and it proved of value, as I had not then discovered the relation between enlisted men and officers.¹⁵

Social Relationships

Officers and men did not, as a matter of course, mingle socially. There was some joint participation in off-duty recreation, such as

¹⁴Mary Simmeson (Cunningham) Logan, Reminiscences of a Soldier's Wife (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), pp. 108-109.

¹⁵G. A. Armes, Ups and Downs of an Army Officer (Washington, D. C., 1900), p. 65.

baseball games and snowball fights, but these were normally company or regimental activities conducted in the camp areas.¹⁶

A captain from Massachusetts, describing the pay day gambling in his regiment, stated that "with the exception of a solitary occurrence in another brigade, I never observed an indiscriminate medley of officers and soldiers in the crowd of [card] players."¹⁷ However, another eastern officer, a major, in describing a river boat journey up the Mississippi, related his astonishment at what he saw. On the boat were veterans of an Indiana regiment going home on furlough, and "they were on terms of great familiarity with their officers, eating, drinking, and playing cards with them." Although convinced that the Army of the West was gravely lacking in discipline, he did feel compelled to admit that "a finer, cleaner, more orderly and well behaved set of men I never saw; the bar was open all the time and was always filled with men and officers, but I did not see an officer or man drunk. . . ." ¹⁸

Separation in rank did not mean the end of old friendships. The 1864 diary of a Volunteer private records that he and a comrade visited a lieutenant who had once been their professor. They were received cordially, and three months later the officer returned their visit.¹⁹

¹⁶George T. Stevens, Three Years in the Sixth Corps (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1870), p. 183.

¹⁷Blake, p. 312.

¹⁸John Chipman Gray and John Codman Ropes, War Letters, 1862-1865 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1927), p. 364.

¹⁹Jenkin L. Jones, An Artilleryman's Diary (Madison, Wisc.: Wisconsin History Commission, 1914), pp. 269, 305.

Another Volunteer private was visited by a general staff major who had looked him up and stopped "to say to me that he understood I was a Norwich boy, and, a Norwich boy himself, he would be happy if I would call on him."²⁰

One of the most articulate descriptions of officer-enlisted relationships as they existed after that first awkward year of the war is found in a cavalry sergeant's account of an incident in Florida:

While at Key West our officers visited Fort Taylor, an old-fashioned place in the neighbourhood [*sic*], and which was garrisoned by a large detachment of negroes, their officers being white men. For some reason or other our officers took me with them, and I enjoyed the inspection of the place very much. But when the drum beat sounded the officers' dinner call, a dilemma arose. I could not, as a non-com, sit at table with commissioned men; the shoulder straps made all the difference, and neither education, refinement, nor character could bridge the chasm. The infantry officers apologized to me and to our officers, and said that they would see that I was properly served without having to sit down with the darkies at their mess, and so they did. After the officers had dined and left the table, I was placed there and a negro waited on me. (Italics mine.)²¹

Mutual Attachments

Hardly a book on the Civil War fails to relate examples of the great personal affection which the soldier felt for certain high commanders, how he cheered them as they galloped by, and how he wept with rage and dismay when they were relieved or transferred to other commands. In the North, McClellan was the most notable example; Grant, perhaps, ran a poor second.

²⁰Lusk, p. 258.

²¹Calvert, p. 163.

But the soldier had some affection left over for his lower commanders as well, and it was often a mutual affair, manifest in gift-giving and other expressions of esteem. The privates of an Indiana regiment presented a two hundred dollar sword to their regimental commander, and the colonel reciprocated with two hundred dollars worth of beer for "the boys."²² In some regiments the men were fond of serenading their officers with brass bands.²³ In one regiment, on New Years day, the officers treated each man to "a tinful of oysters, a chunk of cheese, about three quarters of a pound of butter and a plate of crackers."²⁴ A division commander, on the Fourth of July, donated to each regiment a barrel of ale, and "one or two company commanders contributed bountifully towards defraying the expense of a good dinner for their boys."²⁵

It was not unusual for a popular officer, after moving on to higher command, to continue to identify himself with the men of his old command and they with him. They would cheer him as he rode by them,²⁶ and in battle he would take a position so as to be near them.²⁷

²²Beatty, p. 203.

²³George A. Townsend, Rustics in Rebellion: A Yankee Reporter on the Road to Richmond, 1861-1865 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1950), p. 205.

²⁴Faller, p. 46.

²⁵Hannie M. Tilley (ed.), Federals on the Frontier: The Diary of Benjamin F. McIntyre, 1862-1864 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1963), p. 365.

²⁶John Gibbon, Personal Recollections of the Civil War (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1928), p. 218.

²⁷Hazard Stevens, The Life of Isaac Ingalls Stevens (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1901), Vol. II, pp. 485-86.

The regimental history of the Eighth New York Volunteer Cavalry, for example, states that after Colonel Benjamin Davis was promoted from regimental to brigade commander, "he was always with the Eighth New York Cavalry."²⁸ In fact, when General Davis, as division commander, was killed in an assault by rebel forces, he was in the thick of things with his old regiment, and his last words were, "Stand firm, Eighth New York!"²⁹

Unpopular junior officers, particularly those who seemed too pompous and overly impressed with themselves, were the victims of sly practical jokes designed to deflate them and "teach them a lesson."³⁰

Between Senior and Junior Officers

Interviews

The tenor of personal relationships between senior and junior officers, as well as between officers and men, is indicated in verbal exchanges which took place in interviews. The key figure in the first interview to be recounted was a Volunteer brigade commander who was a gruff taskmaster but had a heart of gold. According to one of his captains, "nobody could be more patient with ignorance which desires to be knowledge," or more willing to sit down with an officer and give him instruction in the keeping of accounts, and then to "invite him to call again if he needs further advice." The captain, a novice in

²⁸ Henry Norton (ed.), Deeds of Daring: History of the 8th New York Volunteer Cavalry (Morwich, N. Y.: Chanango Telegraph Printing House, 1889), p. 40.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 65.

³⁰ Gerrish, p. 144.

courts-martial procedure, found himself on orders as president of a court. Much concerned, he went to the general and asked, "Are you not afraid that an officer who knows nothing of this business will make sad blunders?" "Yes, I am," replied the general. "I am awfully afraid of it. But I suppose the head of your regiment has looked about him and concluded that you would make the fewest blunders of anybody."³¹ Apparently, the left-handed compliment was one of the general's techniques of leadership.

The same captain described the call he and two fellow officers made on their division commander, soon after joining the division. He recalled that the general treated them very courteously and smiled from time to time "after the mechanical fashion of Edward Everett, as if he meant to make things pleasant for us and also to show his handsome teeth. On the whole he seemed less like a major general than like a politician who was coaxing for votes." As a result, the young officers "departed with a sense of having been flattered."³²

The next vignette concerns an exchange between a brigade commander and a lieutenant colonel commanding one of the regiments. It occurred following an action in which the regiment concerned had been poorly led, had failed, and had made an uncereemonious retreat. The regimental commander, in the depths of self-reproach, went to the general, crying in shame, and said, "General, I have behaved like a

³¹ John William De Forest, A Veteran's Adventures, ed. James H. Croushore (New Haven, n.p., 1946), p. 29.

³² Ibid., p. 9. The general described was Major General Benjamin Butler. His politician's polish was probably second nature, since he had been active in Massachusetts politics before volunteering. He was one of the "political generals" discussed earlier.

miserable coward, I ought to be cashiered." The general's response is significant. He chose not to relieve the remorseful colonel of his command or even to censure him. Instead he "comforted him by saying that the intensity of his own feeling was the best proof that he had only yielded to a surprise and it was clear he was no coward."³³

Of course, we have no way of knowing whether the general carried--or had ever read--the Army Officer's Pocket Companion and Manual for Staff Officers in the Field, but in that manual was this bit of philosophy (quoted here again):

A recruit, who deserts during his first engagement, may afterward become a hero. Persevering toil, practice and reflection, can in time make a good general of an indifferent officer.³⁴

The parallel, although not a precise one, should be apparent. The author's philosophy and the general's philosophy were basically the same, that is, that a serious failure does not necessarily mean the end of an individual's effectiveness. The ultimate outcome of the above incident must surely have strengthened the general's conviction in this regard. He wrote that the colonel "died afterward at the head of his regiment. . . . [He] proved himself a lion in every fight."³⁵

Correction f Juniors

There are accounts of the language and manner used by officers when reproving or correcting officers junior to them. For example,

³³Jacob D. Cox, Military Reminiscences of the Civil War (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), Vol. I, pp. 96-97.

³⁴See p. 31.

³⁵Cox, p. 97.

there was a captain's recollection of the brigadier general of artillery who, dressed in spotless uniform and white gloves, rode up to an artillery battery on the morning following a day of heavy fighting. Horses, guns, and men were still covered with mud. The general rebuked the battery commander, "who still suffered from his fatiguing labors, for the dirty appearance of the artillery," and asked, in an arrogant tone:

"Is that battery in a fit condition to move upon the enemy?"

"Yes, it is," he replied.

"Are you a regular? Do you say 'Yes' to me?"

"Yes, I said my battery was ready for service."

"Say, 'Yes, sir,'" he rejoined, and placed great emphasis upon the term "sir."

"Yes, sir," the lieutenant repeated with a salute; and the dignitary, with his silver star and glistening gilt buttons, rode away.³⁶

One thing that aroused the ire of the witness was that the general rode away having said nothing about the conduct of the battery in the previous day's fighting: "He was the type of a large class of regular and staff-officers, who always regarded external show, but never said anything about the services of a battalion;"³⁷

There was the case of the lieutenant who threw a pair of dirty boots to the orderly in company headquarters and told him to clean and black them. The young private replied that he "did not enlist for that kind of service." The lieutenant threatened to tie him up if he did not obey at once, and at that the soldier ran to the regimental commander's tent, pursued by a sergeant. The colonel heard his

³⁶Blake, pp. 82-83.

³⁷Ibid.

complaint, and just then the lieutenant came up to the tent. "The Colonel asked him how he dared to order a soldier of his regiment to perform such menial labor, at the same time notifying him that if he ever heard of his being guilty of such an act again he would take official note of it."³⁸

A major, censuring one of his young lieutenants, took the stern father approach. The nineteen year old lieutenant had gotten permission to be absent from camp until retreat to take a young lady sailboating. As they were coming in, the tide was going out. The lieutenant took to the oars and rowed until his hands were blistered, but he was an hour late. Already reported absent by his company commander, he reported to his battalion commander (this was a special purpose unit, designated a battalion).

"Go to your quarters in arrest, and I'll teach you a lesson about shirking your duty."

"Major,--"

"Not a word, sir."

"Will you let me explain?"

"No. Obey my orders at once."

The next day the distraught young officer again requested, and was granted, the opportunity to explain. He told how he had been a victim of the tide and how he had rowed to shore in an effort to return on time. He ended his story by showing the battalion commander his hands as evidence of his truthfulness. By the lieutenant's recollection:

He let me off with a reprimand, saying that by right no excuse should be taken, but as this was the first offense he would indulge me this time; I must be careful in the

³⁸Armes, p. 65.

future, however. I thanked him and went to my quarters, and I do not believe I ever asked permission to go out of camp again,

I afterwards found my Major to be one of the best-hearted men in the service, and when I left him he explained that what he did was for my own good, and that if I had been his own son he could not have taken a greater interest in me.³⁹

A Volunteer captain's diary contains an anecdote which is perhaps small in itself but which again points out one of the ever-present ills of the Volunteer army--a lack of military courtesy. Moreover, it shows that the enlisted man was not the only offender. And, finally, it reveals the technique used by a brigadier general to correct the situation. The entry reads as follows:

Not that our men are mutinous or disorderly; on the contrary they are as obedient and quiet as sheep. But they don't touch their caps when they meet an officer; they don't salute promptly and stylishly when on guard; in short, they are deficient in soldierly etiquette. For such sins as these the brigadier comes down upon offenders in a style which scares them half out of their wits. Two days ago he fell afoul of a gawky lieutenant who was lately promoted from a sergeantcy. The lieutenant, dressed in trousers and a red shirt, and barefoot, was seated on the head of a barrel, eating an apple and gossiping with a sentry. The general, who was taking a stroll, halted in front of him and glared at him. The lieutenant, without rising, and still munching his apple, saluted.

"Who are you?" snarled the general.

The lieutenant gave his name, title, company and regiment.

"What business had you talking to a guard? What are you dressed in that style for? Don't you know any better?"

The lieutenant dismounted from his barrel and tremulously entered upon a defence of his costume and behavior.

The general interrupted him: "What's your business at home?"

"General, I was a carpenter."

"I should think as much! You'd better go home and get to carpentering again. You may be a good carpenter, but you're a damn poor officer. Be off now, and don't let me catch you talking to a guard again, except when it's your duty to give him instructions."

³⁹Ibid., pp. 75-76.

And with an expression of disgusted despair the general stalked away. . . . "I wouldn't have been so mad with that fool lieutenant," he afterwards explained, "if he hadn't saluted me with his apple core."⁴⁰

The Commander and His Staff

Personal relations between commanders and their staffs appear to have been characterized, generally, by mutual appreciation and loyalty. Inferences of unhappiness among staff members in regard to how they were employed or treated by their commander are extremely rare. One of these rarities involved the division staff who complained their commanding general worked them to death. "On one occasion, three officers of his staff were sent through a drenching rain, and required to remain all night, to superintend personally the unloading of [railroad] cars. This was a subject of some complaint at the time."⁴¹

In official after-action reports, commanders lavished generous praise on their staffs, citing staff officers by name for valorous conduct.⁴²

The same mutual affection that sometimes grew between commanders and men was often evident between commanders and staffs. A captain wrote that his division commander, killed by a sharpshooter, was administered the last rites by a priest "in the presence of his

⁴⁰De Forest, pp. 23-24.

⁴¹U. S., War Department, The War of the Rebellion: Official Records (Washington, 1880-1901), Series I, Vol. XII, Part I, p. 79.

⁴²William T. Sherman, Memirs of General William T. Sherman (New York: Charles L. Webster & Co., 1892), Vol. I, p. 242.

weeping staff . . . , by whom he was greatly loved."⁴³ At Gettysburg, the dust and fumes not yet settled, Brigadier General Alexander Hays and his staff gathered together to exchange victory congratulations. The general's reward to one of his young staff officers was obviously guided by his emotions:

The general takes young Dave Shields, his boy lieutenant and aide-de-camp,--not yet twenty years old and can count nearly as many battles,--in his arms, imprinting a kiss on his cheek, while his boyish face is yet aglow with the flush and his bright eye sparkling with the fire of victory. What youth in the land would not be prouder of that kiss of honor from his general, than of a hundred from the lips of the fairest maiden?⁴⁴

Between Volunteer Officers and Professional Officers

Although the Regular Army officers (most of them West Point graduates) who took commissions in the Volunteer army were respected for their knowledge and ability, they were often disliked by Volunteer officers because of their methods and their manner. Some of them lacked the patience, diplomacy, and flexibility needed to work in harmony with citizen-officers. A war reporter wrote that "the arrogance of the regular officers and the pride of the volunteers had embittered each against the other."⁴⁵ An inference that there was some truth in this statement was seen in chapter III, "Leadership Problems in Building the Volunteer Army," where the regimental

⁴³Elake, p. 186.

⁴⁴"Brigadier-General Alexander Hays," United States Service Magazine, Vol. V (July-December, 1864), p. 270.

⁴⁵Townsend, p. 112.

commander being inspected by the Regular Army lieutenant referred to him as "the most conceited little popinjay who ever strutted in uniform."⁴⁶

Another such inference is found in the case of the regimental commander (a former Regular Army captain) and his lieutenant colonel who didn't get along. The second-in-command accused the colonel of arbitrary and tyrannical conduct. Regimental officers took sides, and discord reigned. Finally, the brigade commander had to intervene and arbitrate to restore harmony. Ironically, the general also became involved in a Regular-versus-Volunteer intrigue. One of his colonels, a politician, openly protested the appointment of a Regular as brigade commander, arguing that a brigade of Volunteers should be commanded by a Volunteer officer. However, neither his political nor military influence was sufficient to enable him to have the brigade commander ousted.⁴⁷

Finally, there was the Volunteer brigade commander who "felt the sting of his commander's tongue more than the bullet which had shattered his arm." As he rode from the battlefield, he told his Regular commander that the reserves were needed up front, "and the proud 're-ular' . . . answered the officious 'volunteer' to the effect that he knew his own business." The teller of this tale goes on to say that "not the least among the causes of the North's inefficiency will be found the ill feeling between the professional and civil soldiery."⁴⁸

⁴⁶See p. 35.

⁴⁷Gibbon, pp. 28-29.

⁴⁸Townsend, p. 236.

There can be little doubt that antipathy between Volunteer and Regular officers caused some loss of harmony and efficiency among officers. However, lest the impression be left that the problem was more serious than it actually was, it should be pointed out that historical references to it are not sufficiently numerous to call it a major deterrent to the Union war effort. The feeling was not that intense or widespread.

A Case of No Love Lost

Major General E. D. Keyes, a corps commander in the Army of the Potomac, once wrote that "in all armies there is a class of men who are at variance with their commanding officer. Of that class, so far as my reading and military experience extends, Henry M. Naglee is entitled to stand head."⁴⁹ He was referring to Brigadier General Naglee, one of his division commanders. Their dislike for one another is made clear in an exchange of correspondence, a classic in polite but pointed restraint. In June 1863, General Naglee wrote his corps commander as follows:

General:

I am most happy to advise you that I have been transferred . . . into the Department of North Carolina.

It may be equally agreeable and satisfactory to you, as it certainly is to myself, to be assured that the separation will be a permanent one.

H. M. Naglee

Ten days later came General Keyes' reply:

General:

Your letter of the 15th instant has been received. The happiness you express in your announcement of a permanent separation from me, is, I assure you, most cordially reciprocated.

⁴⁹Erasmus Darwin Keyes, Fifty Years' Observation of Men and Events (New York, C. Scribner's Sons, 1884), pp. 476-77.

cated. I will add, with the risk of being thought to exaggerate, that I do not believe any one of your previous commanding officers was made more happy at parting with you than I was.

Very respectfully, etc.

E. D. Keyes⁵⁰

The cause of the discord between these Volunteer generals is not known. Perhaps it is unimportant. The important thing is: How much efficiency was lost? That, too, is unknown.

Summary and Discussion

The reader in search of a pattern in the techniques used by officers in dealing with subordinates must conclude, from the representative samples shown, that there was none. The techniques, actions, and orders of individual officers were as varied as the individuals themselves.

It can be generalized, however, that, once the Volunteer army had settled down and become less like a mob and more like an army, personal relationships reflected the distinction between officer and enlisted man. The soldier's contacts with his officers were official in nature; however, he found his officers generally approachable and civil. Some of them he found notably kind and gentlemanly. He and his comrades greatly appreciated these latter, and often strong mutual attachments developed.

Although such attachments also developed between senior and subordinate officers (particularly between commanders and staffs), commanders appear to have been a little quicker to lose their tempers with junior officers than with enlisted men.

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 478-79.

Ill feeling existed between some Volunteer and professional officers. At the root of the ill will were the volunteer's pride, alleged arrogance of some of the Regulars, and the objections of the Volunteers to harsh methods used by the Regulars.

It should be added here that, during the last year of the war, there was a gradual lessening of the "friendly feeling of cordial comradeship" between officers and men which had existed earlier. The reason: necessity. Bounty jumpers were now coming into the Army. They required sterner discipline, and the line between recruit and officer had to be made more rigid. A matter of tailoring the style of leadership to fit the nature of the led.⁵¹

⁵¹Frank Wilkeson, Recollections of a Private Soldier in the Army of the Potomac (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1893), p. 30.

CHAPTER V

MAJOR MORALE FACTORS AND LEADERS' CONDUCT

General

Morale is "the fertile soil in which the seeds of discipline, esprit de corps, and proficiency are sown." That is, it is the sum total of all the attitudes of the individual.¹ Therefore, in our investigation of these indicators of leadership in the Union Volunteer army, let us begin with morale. Since the soldier's morale is affected by his attitude toward everything that seems important to him,² it follows that everything important to him can be called a morale factor. But to examine every single morale factor in the soldier's life--and the actions of officers in regard to it--would be an impossible task, if not unnecessary. So let us concentrate on certain facets of the soldier's life which held special importance for him, as manifest in letters, diaries, and memoirs of both officers and men. We will see what actions leaders took or failed to take in regard to these major morale factors.

¹U. S., Department of the Army, Field Manual 22-100, Military Leadership (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, June 1961), p. 38.

²Ibid.

Confidence in Officers

General

A successful Union commander, who rose from captain to major general, wrote after the war that one of the most remarkable things about the Volunteer soldiers was their intuitive judgment regarding their officers. He stated that this judgment was formed "irrespective of the personal popularity of the officer." Further, he made this interesting observation:

In many cases the utmost confidence was placed in officers who never seemed to excite any enthusiasm among the troops. This judgment was sometimes hasty, but seldom very far from wrong, and when unjust was very speedily corrected.³

If it wasn't pure popularity or the ability to excite enthusiasm, then what was it that made the difference between a soldier's vote of confidence and no confidence in his officers?

Consideration for Subordinates

One major factor was the officer's consideration for his subordinates--his "looking out for his men," preventing unnecessary hardships and alleviating the necessary ones when he could. As might be expected, there were officers who met this test and there were those who did not. One who met it was the major whose men were camped in a section of Missouri where the loyalty of the inhabitants was doubtful. Firewood was very scarce, and the cutting of farmers' fence rails was prohibited. Nevertheless, the officer, according to a soldier's diary, "allowed us rails enough to make a fire to cook our Suppers and make

³ John Gibbon, Personal Recollections of the Civil War (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1928), p. 424.

us comfortable through the night. . . . We all appreciated the Kindness of Maj Bruce and sometime he may learn how much."⁴

The test was met by the colonel who wrote to his wife that his regiment was destitute for clothing and shoes. "I have used every exertion to obtain a supply of clothing, and only this morning succeeded in getting some underclothing for the men. Pants or coats I cannot get."⁵

General Phil Sheridan, when he was a division commander, had a similar problem of clothing his men. Wagon trains started out for his command, loaded with shoes, overcoats, and tentage, but other commanders through whose areas the trains passed would stop the trains and distribute the contents to their own troops, leaving him only a small share. Finally, he devised the plan of filling the open spaces in the wagons between the bows and the load with fodder and hay. Through this deception the wagons came through safe and undisturbed as a "forage train."⁶

One regimental commander, during a critical point in a campaign in the South, won the gratitude of his troops when he ordered out all camp followers, peddlers, and newspaper correspondents to help

⁴Nannie M. Tilley (ed.), Federals on the Frontier: The Diary of Benjamin F. McIntyre, 1862-1864 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1963), p. 156. Could it be that this soldier unconsciously revealed two of the things that meant the most to him when he spelled Supper with a capital "S" and Kindness with a capital "K"?

⁵Rufus R. Dawes, Service with the Sixth Wisconsin Volunteers (Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1962), p. 104.

⁶P. H. Sheridan, Personal Memoirs of P. H. Sheridan (New York: Charles L. Webster & Co., 1888), Vol. I, pp. 329-30.

his men work on the fortifications. A soldier's diary described this bold action as "a tough pull for them, but justifiable and highly acceptable to the soldiers."⁷

A division commander was concerned about the hardships endured by the company officers in his division. Whereas the soldier carried his rations, cooking utensils, and a shelter tent on his person, the officer's rations and gear were carried on wagons which brought up the rear. When roads were bad, the wagons were often delayed and the officers were without food and shelter. The general, although fearing for their health and morale, wanted to avoid their having to carry their own rations, tentage, and frying pans. Such a requirement, he felt, would "break down the last vestige in distinction in mode of life between them and their commands." He wrote a long letter to the army commander, spelling out his concern and requesting that a pack mule be authorized for each company, to move with the company and carry the officers' gear. The request was granted.⁸

It is significant that the general was also conscious of the disparity in living conditions between field and staff. In his letter he wrote, "I fear many of our officers will break down in health, and many more, becoming disgusted with the hardships of the service, and especially the difference between themselves and their more fortunate brethren of the staff and staff-corps, will seek to leave the army."⁹

⁷Jenkin L. Jones, An Artilleryman's Diary (Madison: Wisconsin History Commission, 1914), p. 209.

⁸U. S., War Department, The War of the Rebellion: Official Records, hereafter referred to as Official Records (Washington, 1880-1901), Vol. XLV, Part II, p. 312.

⁹Ibid.

Now to the other side of the ledger. Here are some examples:

1) A cavalry regiment was on an ocean voyage down the east coast, enroute to duty in New Orleans. The officers occupied only a small number of the staterooms on board, leaving many unoccupied. Non-commissioned officers and privates were quartered below deck among the horses, where the air was hot and foul. Company officers requested that the non-commissioned officers and as many privates as possible be quartered in the unoccupied staterooms. The colonel refused, and, as a cavalry sergeant tells it, his refusal "rankled in our hearts and turned us against him." In fact, he said, "the men who were on board that transport carried from it into after life the memory of [the] injustice. . . ." ¹⁰

2) An ambulance train was struggling slowly to the rear along a narrow, muddy road. Finally, it came to a dead halt. A sick soldier in one of the wagons heard the officer in charge of the train tell the driver:

"Well, Sam, unhook your horses, we are to stop here for the night." "Stop here," answered the astonished Sam, "what shall we do with the sick fellers? I reckon they're pretty well gone for it, by the way they have groaned and raved all day."

"That is none of my business," gruffly replied the officer. "All I have to do is haul them as long as they are alive; the more that die the fewer we shall have to haul," and with a coarse laugh he rode on. ¹¹

3) A regiment moved into a bivouac area near Memphis on a cold, windy January night. There was no shelter and no wood to make

¹⁰ Henry Murray Calvert, Reminiscences of a Boy in Blue (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1920), pp. 160-61.

¹¹ Theodore Gerrish, Army Life: A Private's Reminiscences of the Civil War (Portland, Maine: Hoyt, Fogg & Donham, 1882), p. 58.

a fire. Men and horses spent a miserable night, while "the quartermaster and the commissary, whose business it was to see to our comfort, housed themselves snugly in the city of Memphis, and their selfishness was followed by most of the officers." A cavalry trooper called the whole affair "shiftlessness, disgraceful shiftlessness, on the part of the officers who were paid to watch over us."¹²

Throughout the war, the march was a great separator of leaders from mere officers. Except for battle itself, the march was probably more apt than anything else to bring out an officer's true colors. Not only did it reveal much about his professional ability, but it showed the extent of his consideration for his troops. There were officers who marched their commands in the cruel heat of the day when they could have marched during the cool hours and slept during the hot. There were commanders who halted their troops in the hot sun while they and their staffs took to the shade. Some commanders unnecessarily marched their men for hours without a pause for rest or water, or permitted halts at irregular intervals and of uncertain duration, so "the men did not know when they could enjoy them" or how long. After rest stops, troops were commanded to "fall in" and then "sometimes stood in their places half of an hour before the march was resumed; and were fatigued during this time, as if they had been in motion." Nothing except defeat in battle could so completely demoralize a unit as a poorly conducted march.¹³ Nowhere but in battle

¹²Calvert, pp. 284-85.

¹³Henry N. Blake, Three Years in the Army of the Potomac (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1865), pp. 9-10, 191-92, 232; John William De Forest, A Veteran's Adventures, ed. James H. Croushore (New Haven, n.p., 1946), pp. 101-102; Gibbon, pp. 18-19.

were the actions of officers a subject of more criticism or praise than on the march. Even the mounted officers who considerately rode through the fields alongside the line of march so as not to interfere with the troops drew special comment in the reminiscences of a junior officer.¹⁴

Generals at the Front

It will be recalled that the Army Regulations of 1861 stipulated that "if troops bivouac in presence of the enemy, the Generals bivouac with them."¹⁵ But any general whose only exposure to the enemy was in bivouac was of no value in the minds of his troops. They expected to see their generals on the battle line, and not merely for infrequent visits.¹⁶ Even though a general may not have been branded an out-and-out coward by his men, if they even suspected him of possessing too much of "the rascally virtue called caution," his influence over them was impaired.¹⁷ Soldiers placed such a great premium on the personal bravery of their generals that "the shirking of bloody work by some of the generals . . . disheartened the enlisted men and embittered them."¹⁸ A Volunteer gave vent to his feelings when he

¹⁴George Ward Nichols, "From Reveille to Taps," The Blue and the Gray, ed. Henry Steele Commager (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950), Vol. I, pp. 419-20.

¹⁵See pp. 26-27.

¹⁶Blake, p. 26.

¹⁷G. A. Armes, Ups and Downs of an Army Officer (Washington, D. C., 1900), p. 711.

¹⁸Frank Wilkeson, Recollections of a Private Soldier in the Army of the Potomac (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1893), p. 185.

wrote, after a disastorous assault on enemy fortifications:

I must add that there was a strange lack of commanders at the vital points. Not a single general, . . . went near the ramparts during the whole day. . . . There were high officers, such as commanders of brigades and divisions, who might surely have granted us their immediate direction. It is certain that during all that bloody daybreak, while there was still a chance of success, we direly needed the guidance and encouragement of a general.¹⁹

One soldier kept a sort of mental score of the number of times he saw certain generals expose themselves to fire, and he further noted whether they were within range of musketry or only cannon.²⁰

Many general officers were often in close combat, some even leading the charge.²¹ Many were killed, as the score-keeping soldier well knew, for he also kept a tally on the relative losses of generals on both sides. Quoting statistics, he noted that, in the Army of the Potomac, the ratio of generals killed to enlisted men killed was lower than in the Confederate Army. This was a disappointment to him, for he considered it a sign of poor leadership. He said:

Our losses of general officers, if they had fearlessly performed their duty, should have been at least four times as heavy as those of the Confederates. Instead of one Union general being killed to over 44,000 enlisted men stricken in battle, there should have been at least twenty of them killed and eighty of them wounded, and there probably would have been if they had done their duty as recklessly as the Confederate generals did theirs. . . . Southern generals led their soldiers to death and shared it with them.²²

¹⁹De Forest, pp. 143-44.

²⁰Wilkeson, p. 93.

²¹George A. Townsend, Rustics in Rebellion: A Yankee Reporter on the Road to Richmond, 1861-1865 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1950), p. 256.

²²Wilkeson, pp. 181-85.

Professional Competence

Many officers' blunders undoubtedly went unnoticed by enlisted men who lacked the knowledge and experience to recognize them as blunders. But sooner or later the men learned who were professionally competent and who were not.²³ It was not particularly important to them that an officer have a detailed knowledge of military theory and tactics, however. The essentials of competence were, to them, "a bold heart, a cool head, . . . practical common-sense,"²⁴ and the ability to win. In the final analysis, they rarely believed that anybody but their commander was to blame when they were beaten,²⁵ and their degree of success in battle determined their judgment of his worth. "Grumble as much as they might at hard work, long marches, and short rations, the results, when they became apparent, atoned for everything."²⁶

Some commanders forced their incompetent officers to resign.²⁷ After the first months of the war, examining boards were appointed to determine what to do about officers considered incompetent or guilty of improper conduct. Officers from divisions, regiments, and brigades sat as members and obviously influenced the riddance of the inept, for many were dismissed.²⁸

²³Sheridan, Vol. I, pp. 153-54.

²⁴Jacob D. Cox, Military Reminiscences of the Civil War (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), Vol. I, p. 189.

²⁵De Forest, p. 145

²⁶Gibbon, p. 425.

²⁷George T. Stevens, Three Years in the Sixth Corps (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1870), p. 118; Cox, Vol. I, p. 439.

²⁸John Beatty, Memoirs of a Volunteer (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1946), p. 189; Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, War Papers, Commandery of the State of Wisconsin (Milwaukee: Burdick, Armitage & Allen, 1896), Vol. II, pp. 75-76.

Assaults against Enemy Fieldworks

General Schofield said that "the veteran American soldier fights very much as he has been accustomed to work his farm or run his sawmill: he wants to see a fair prospect that it is 'going to pay.'"²⁹ General Sheridan expressed the same thought when he said that soldiers "want some tangible indemnity for the loss of life,. . . ."³⁰ The Volunteer soldier gradually became convinced that frontal assaults against prepared enemy earthworks offered only loss of life with no tangible indemnity. The feeling was born of repeated failures, yet some commanders continued to order such assaults. They had not learned--or refused to accept the fact--that, with the advent of the breech-loading rifle, the days of mass frontal assaults against covered positions were over. They had not learned the techniques of maneuver. General Schofield wrote what many an infantryman knew: "To mass troops against the fire of a covered line is simply to devote them to destruction. The greater the mass, the greater the loss--that is all."³¹ Infantry soldiers ordered to assault earthworks "wished they were dead and their troubles over."³²

It was not unusual for the command to be given to commence an assault and then for no one to stir. Even the urgings of officers were of no avail. Some officers joined the men in their defiance of what

²⁹ John M. Schofield, Forty-Six Years in the Army (New York: The Century Co., 1897), p. 145.

³⁰ Sheridan, Vol. I, pp. 153-54.

³¹ Schofield, pp. 145-46.

³² Wilkeson, p. 127.

they considered to be stupid orders.³³ Some veteran units went a short distance, then lay down and opened fire. "It became a saying in the army that when the old troops got as far forward as they thought they ought to go 'they sat down and made coffee!'"³⁴

A Volunteer colonel, told to reorganize a decimated brigade and lead it in a second attempt to storm rebel fortifications, sent a messenger back to the general. "Tell him that I have formed the column, and that, if he wants it to charge, he may come and lead it. I for my part am not going to take it into that slaughter pen." The colonel's defiance cost him his commission, but the second attempt was cancelled.³⁵

General Schofield, who obviously felt strongly about this matter, felt there was a lesson in it:

[The veteran American soldier's] loyalty, discipline, and pluck will not allow him under any circumstances to retreat without orders, much less run away; but if he encounters a resistance which he thinks he cannot overcome, or which he thinks it would "cost too much" to overcome, he will lie down, cover himself with a little parapet, and hold his ground against any force that may attempt to drive him back. This feeling of the soldier is an element in the problem of war which cannot be ignored. (Italics mine.)³⁶

Individual Recognition

After-Action Reports

Army regulations acknowledged the importance of giving formal recognition to the soldier who had shown himself deserving. They provided that "when an officer or soldier deserves mention for conduct in

³³ Ibid., pp. 134-35.

³⁴ Gibbon, p. 228-29.

³⁵ De Forest, p. 141.

³⁶ Schofield, p. 145.

action a special report shall be made in his case,"³⁷ Usually, these special reports were incorporated into commanders' official after-action reports. In addition to writing a detailed account of the action, the commander praised, by name, the officers and men who had distinguished themselves, and described their deeds.³⁸ One deed which was almost certain to get a soldier's name recorded for posterity was the capture of a Confederate battle flag.³⁹

General Orders

The after-action reports were supposed to be coldly and objectively written--a straight accounting of the facts. However, the acknowledgements sometimes bordered on the emotional, and were generously sprinkled with such adjectives as "brave," "gallant," and "resolute." Sometimes the truth was even stretched a bit. But it was good for the morale of the men cited, whose names often appeared again later in general orders from higher headquarters.⁴⁰

Sometimes the discovery of his name in general orders was a complete but pleasant surprise for a soldier, who had been given no hint he "had been noticed any more than thousands of others. . . ."⁴¹

³⁷ U. S., War Department, Revised United States Army Regulations of 1861, hereafter referred to as Regulations of 1861 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1863), p. 107.

³⁸ Beatty, p. 188; William T. Sherman, Memoirs of General William T. Sherman (New York: Charles L. Webster and Company, 1892), Vol. I, p. 242; "Brigadier-General Alexander Hays," United States Service Magazine, Vol. V (July - December, 1864), pp. 586-87.

³⁹ "Brigadier-General Alexander Hays," United States Service Magazine, Vol. V (July - December, 1864), pp. 586-87.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 580, 586-87; Beatty, p. 188; Armes, pp. 126-27.

⁴¹ Armes, pp. 126-27.

And one can imagine the soldier's feelings as he read the sort of statement which often concluded such orders: "Full justice will be done to all who are entitled to it."⁴²

Promotions

"Full justice" often meant promotion, the most prized reward for gallantry or exemplary performance of duty. However, not all commanders faced the promotion dilemma which confronted the captain who had two brothers in his company. They had volunteered together, and "were both good boys" who had always done their duty. He had one vacancy for a corporalcy and wanted one of them to have it. He solved his dilemma by telling them to decide between themselves and let him know.⁴³

As previously mentioned, many promising enlisted men were promoted to commissioned ranks.⁴⁴

A promotion device commonly used for rewarding officers was the brevet.⁴⁵ Brevet promotions brought greater dignity, but not always more pay or authority. They were temporary, honorary promotions whose purpose was "to pay compliments to meritorious officers without overburdening the army with officers of high rank."⁴⁶ Commanders bestowed them rather generously, and many felt that a dispro-

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Leo W. and John I. Faller, Dear Folks at Home (Harrisburg, Penn.: The Telegraphic Press, 1831), p. 2; Calvert, p. 59.

⁴⁴ See p. 17.

⁴⁵ Armes, pp. 126-27.

⁴⁶ Theodore Lyman, Meade's Headquarters, 1863-1865, ed. George R. Agassiz (Boston: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1922), p. 289.

portionate share of them went to officers on duty in the "political pool" in Washington. There was a saying in the Union Army that "one campaign in Washington brings more promotion than a dozen in the field."⁴⁷

The officers of one company in the field, feeling they deserved to be promoted, initiated a self-help program to speed up the action. They drew up a petition to their state governor and presented it to each member of the company for signing. A soldier recorded that "I do not think however more than one half of our number signed it and those who did had furloughs in their minds and they dare not refuse."⁴⁸

Decorations

Individual decorations played only a minor role in the system of recognition. Soldiers were envious of their immigrant comrades who wore proudly their medals won in foreign armies, but they were to have few medals of their own. Not until July of 1862 did Congress authorize the President to have 2,000 "medals of honor" made and presented to "such non-commissioned officers and privates as shall most distinguish themselves by their gallantry in action, and other soldier-like qualities, during the present insurrection."⁴⁹ These medals, the

⁴⁷Gibbon, p. iv.

⁴⁸Tilley, p. 136.

⁴⁹U. S., War Department, General Orders for 1862 (Washington, 1862), General Orders No. 91, July 29, 1862.

early version of our Medal of Honor, were prized,⁵⁰ and the exclusion of officers from eligibility created some discontent.⁵¹

Information

The Volunteer soldier was hungry for information. He wanted to know at all times how his regiment and corps were doing, how adjacent commands were doing, and how the war was going. He walked from campfire to campfire at night seeking bits of information;⁵² he "pumped" his chaplain, who sometimes revealed what was going on in official circles;⁵³ and he read eagerly the newspapers he received from home. He sought the truth behind every rumor, and there were many of them. One commander said, "We were to get them daily and almost hourly; sometimes with a little foundation in fact, sometimes with none; rarely purposely deceptive, but always grossly exaggerated, making chimeras [imaginary monsters] with which a commanding officer had to wage a more incessant warfare than with the substantial enemy in his front."⁵⁴

In regard to rumors about current or projected operations, commanders below division level had little with which to wage their warfare. Plans for an attack or a movement were seldom disclosed to

⁵⁰Armes, p. 127; Letter to the Editors, Army and Navy Journal (New York) March 11, 1865, p. 454.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Wilkeson, pp. 52-54.

⁵³H. Clay Trumbull, War Memories of a Chaplain (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898), pp. 109-10.

⁵⁴Cox, Vol. I, pp. 65-66.

anyone without stars.⁵⁵ As a result, lower commanders and their men were unaware of the "big picture." Particularly in the early part of the war, it was considered "enough for the men and inferior officers to know that their superiors were wise, and had in view some gigantic plan which would end the war and rebellion."⁵⁶ One division commander force-marched his division a grueling eighty-seven miles in seventy-six hours, covering thirty-four miles in one day. At no time before, during, or after the march did he offer the troops any kind of an explanation.⁵⁷

Generally, however, commanders at all levels were conscientious about informing their men of important events which had already occurred, such as changes in commanders, organizational changes, and successes and reverses on other fronts.⁵⁸ Such announcements were made by reading dispatches and general orders to the troops at parade or other formations or halting regiments on the march. In regiments which had been depleted to far below the authorized 1,000 man strength (and this eventually included almost all regiments), a strong-voiced colonel could gather the men around him and talk to the entire regiment himself.⁵⁹

⁵⁵Lewis A. Grant, "The Old Vermont Brigade at Petersburg," pp. 397-98, and Edwin C. Mason, "Recollections of the Mine Run Campaign," pp. 324-25, all from Glimpses of the Nation's Struggle, ed. The Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, Minnesota Commandery (St. Paul, Minn.: St. Paul Book and Stationery Co., 1887), Vol. I; De Forest, pp. 166-67.

⁵⁶Grant, pp. 397-98.

⁵⁷De Forest, pp. 101-102.

⁵⁸Faller, p. 57; Tilley, p. 46; Blake, p. 78; Henry Norton (ed.), Deeds of Daring: History of the 8th New York Volunteer Cavalry (Norwich, N. Y.: Chanango Telegraph Printing House, 1889), p. 104.

⁵⁹Beatty, pp. 5, 72.

Newspapers were an important source of information, and commanders gave news peddlers freedom of camps and bivouac areas. An Austrian officer, an observer with the Army of the Potomac, "was extremely surprised when he beheld the soldiers all running to buy newspapers."⁶⁰

The commander today would do well to read the following account, written by an artillery private, showing the lengths men were willing to go to in order to learn what was going on about them. And he might consider whether he is satisfying his own troops' need for news.

In all our armies in the civil war there was among the enlisted men, the volunteers, a system of gathering and distributing news that beat the information we received from division and corps head-quarters both in time and accuracy. The system was paralleled by that of the slaves who walked the plantations lying within the Confederacy, o' nights. These army news-reporters who walked through the camps at night to meet other soldiers and gather intelligence and discuss the campaign, were almost invariably Americans. I cannot recall ever having met, on these night ranges, men of other nationality.

There was a burning desire among these men to know how other commands fared, and to gather accurate information, so as to correctly judge of the battle's tide, the progress of the campaign, and the morale of the army. The enlisted men knew of defeats and successes long before they were published in general orders. The truth is that the privates of the army--the volunteers without bounty I mean--never believed a report that was published from head-quarters, unless it corresponded with the information the "camp-walkers" had gathered. It was surprising how quickly important news relative to a battle or the campaign spread throughout the army. The news was carried from camp-fire to camp-fire at night, and it was generally reliable and wonderfully full and accurate.

Often as I sat by the camp-fire, talking with my comrades, I have seen shadowy forms hurrying rapidly through the woods, or along the roads, and I knew men who were hungry for authentic

⁶⁰ Lyman, p. 21.

news were beating the camps and battle-line to obtain it. Frequently these figures would halt, and then, seeing our fire with men around it, they would issue forth from the woods and join us. They would sit down, fill their pipes, light them with glowing coals, and then, with their rifles lying across their knees, ask for the Second Corps news, inquire as to our losses, and whether we had gained or lost ground, and what Confederate command was opposed to us. They would anxiously inquire as to the truth of rumors of disaster which they might have heard during the day. They would listen attentively to what we said, and it was a point of honor not to give false information to these men. And then they would briefly tell the Fifth, or Sixth, or Ninth Corps news, and quickly disappear in the darkness. I have often, after a day's service at the guns, walked three miles in the dark to verify a rumor that affected our safety. (Italics mine.)⁶¹

Welfare of Subordinates

General

The following morale factors are some of those which had-- and still have today-- a direct and often immediate impact on the soldier's physical and spiritual well-being.

Homesickness and Concern for Family

The wife of a Volunteer colonel, who accompanied her husband when he took his new regiment to training camp, wrote of the activities that filled the soldiers' day and added that "to men who had known no discipline or superior authority, this was very hard and left little opportunity for aught save the homesickness that every soldier experienced."⁶²

The two greatest remedies for the soldier's homesickness and

⁶¹Wilkeson, pp. 52-54.

⁶²Mary Simmeson (Cunningham) Logan, Reminiscences of a Soldier's Wife (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), p. 107.

worry about his family were furloughs (for enlisted men) and leaves (for officers) and mail from home. Of course, some letters only made matters worse, such as the one "Sol" showed to his colonel, in which his wife said, "For God sake do come home."⁶³ Mothers wrote, "Do come home; I do so want to see my boy if only for a little while." Soldier sons, many of them just boys, replied that they would come if they could, and then began to chafe and fret and worry themselves homesick until they "weren't worth a row of pins."⁶⁴

During the first year of the war, regimental commanders were authorized to approve enlisted men's furloughs. They granted furloughs rather liberally, some of them giving preference to men with families.⁶⁵ Thereafter, however, furlough policies were established on higher level, and commanders at division level and below had little latitude. Because of depletion of units and the fact that many men on furlough forgot to come back, furloughs became hard to get and there was much "red tape" involved.⁶⁶ Evidence indicates, however, that commanders sent forward, with recommendations for approval, as many furlough applications as were permissible. The number allowed was usually greater during "winter quarters," when the war slowed down. Nevertheless, one soldier who had worn out one set of false

⁶³See p. 57.

⁶⁴Oliver Willcox Norton, Army Letters, 1861-1865 (Chicago: O. L. Deming, 1903), pp. 168-69.

⁶⁵Hazard Stevens, The Life of Isaac Ingalls Stevens (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1901), Vol. II, p. 326.

⁶⁶Norton, pp. 168-69; Tilley, p. 135; John Chipman Gray and John Codman Ropes, War Letters, 1862-1865 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1927), p. 278.

teeth on Army bread was denied a ten day furlough to get a new set.⁶⁷

Officers found it no easier to obtain leaves. Regulations stated that no leave of absence would "be granted to an officer during the season of active operations, except on urgent necessity."⁶⁸ Hence, when the Army went into winter quarters, officers submitted an abundance of leave applications, to which they often attached back-up statements about their patriotic service, their many battle wounds, and sick wives and mothers. Some added their assurance that they could "easily bring back fifty volunteers with them, to fill up their regiment!"⁶⁹ The strict leave policy was a source of some discontent. One major, for example, was irate because he had gotten only seven days leave in two and a half years of service.⁷⁰

The scarcity of leaves and furloughs notwithstanding, the Army did acknowledge their morale value. It was expressed by a Union general who believed that "those who had an opportunity to go home and see their families, assure themselves of their welfare and make the necessary provisions for their support and comfort, returned to the army with a new lease of the life military and better prepared to serve faithfully. . . ."⁷¹

⁶⁷Gray and Ropes, pp. 7-8.

⁶⁸Regulations of 1861, p. 31.

⁶⁹Lyman, pp. 59-60.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 59.

⁷¹Gibbon, p. 276.

The Army mail system was well organized, and mail distribution was as regular and frequent as roads, railroads, and battle situations would permit.⁷² Commanders apparently had to exert little pressure to insure efficient mail service in their units. A regimental chaplain wrote that it was "a point of soldierly honor" with the military letter-carriers to lose no time in delivering the mail, even though they often had to do it under fire.⁷³ In some regiments, the commander assigned the chaplain additional duties as unofficial overseer of the mail service.⁷⁴ In the many comments of soldiers about the mail service, only one complaint was found regarding mishandling of mail. A captain wrote that a certain general, a heavy drinker, seized the division mail-wagon on a long march and kept it more than two weeks "(during which time the soldiers received no letters), in order that his stock of liquors might be transported,"⁷⁵

Mess

A soldier in the Army of the Potomac wrote that "the government exerted itself to supply us with good rations of food."⁷⁶ "Good rations of food" were usually available when units were in camp for any length of time and the Commissary Department was able to catch up.

⁷²R. U. Johnson and Clarence C. Buel, Battles and Leaders of the Civil War (New York: The Century Co., 1887), Vol. IV, p. 90; Trumbull, pp. 139-40.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴James H. Bradford, "The Chaplains in the Volunteer Army," War Papers, Commandery of District of Columbia (Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, 1892), p. 8.

⁷⁵Blake, p. 315.

⁷⁶Gerrish, p. 203.

Under such conditions, though the bill of fare was nothing fancy, the soldier ate reasonably well.

Campaigning in the field, the menu was a much different story. It usually consisted of coffee, hard tack (a flour-and-water biscuit), and salt pork.⁷⁷ Coffee was first in importance to the soldier. It was his "comfort and luxury," and commanders, as a matter of course, halted their troops on the march to allow them to boil a pot of "the cheering beverage."⁷⁸

In some regiments the men formed small messes of five or six men and cooked their own meals.⁷⁹ In others, men were detailed as company or regimental cooks and meals were prepared centrally. An officer who preferred the latter system wrote that "the regiment that has the best cooks will be the healthiest and most effective. One good cook is worth ten doctors; . . ."⁸⁰ Officers discovered that many of the Negroes who flocked to the camps seeking food and work were good cooks and hired them "to the manifest benefit of the men and an equal advantage to the service."⁸¹

Bread, second in importance only to coffee, was a luxury often difficult to obtain. Some commanders saved sugar and other plentiful items from their messes, sold them to civilians nearby, and bought bread.⁸²

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 54.

⁷⁸Cox, Vol. II, p. 237.

⁷⁹Faller, p. 18.

⁸⁰Annals of the Army of the Cumberland (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1863), pp. 278-79.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Jones, p. 310.

A source of supplementary rations was the sutler, the recognized regimental merchant. Operating with the consent of the colonel, he accompanied the regiment with his wagonload of early-day "PX" items--tobacco, lemons, soda crackers, condensed milk, canned fruits, pickles, sardines, etcetera.⁸³ One soldier, who bought buckwheat flour from the sutler and baked his own cakes, wrote that his commander had arranged for the men to pay for their purchases with "sutler's tickets," a form of scrip accepted by the sutler when the paymaster was late.⁸⁴ Regulations required commanders to see that sutlers sold their goods at a reasonable price.⁸⁵ Some commanders were obviously negligent in this respect, since complaints of exorbitant prices were common.⁸⁶

One officer, when rations were late and the sutler was in the rear, dumped out the contents of his haversack and "made a divy with his men." The few crumbs of hard tack did little to satisfy the hunger of the half-dozen who partook of it, "yet they were grateful for even this."⁸⁷ Another officer wrote of a day on which "the rations were long in coming and the men could not fill their haversacks till about noon, the officers getting nothing."⁸⁸

⁸³Charles B. Johnson, "The Soldier Gets Paid and the Sutler Gets the Money," The Blue and the Gray, ed. Henry Steele Commager (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950), Vol. I, p. 438; George K. Collins, Memoirs of the 149th Regt. N. Y. Vol. Inf. (Syracuse, N. Y.: By the Author, 1891), p. 191.

⁸⁴Faller, pp. 49, 71.

⁸⁵Regulations of 1861, p. 490.

⁸⁶Gray and Ropes, p. 86; James M. Nichols, Perry's Saints (Boston: D. Lothrop & Co., 1886), p. 71.

⁸⁷Collins, pp. 203-204.

⁸⁸De Forest, p. 161.

But for their servants, officers would have gotten nothing more often. Pay was sometimes months late and they found themselves with no money to draw rations. Faced with hunger, they felt compelled to allow their servants (usually emancipated slaves) to forage for them. One captain became aware his servant often stole sheep, chickens, corn, and other provisions from dwellings instead of being given them, as he indicated. "But I had not the stomach to stop it. To march without food was impossible, and to buy without money was equally out of the question."⁸⁹

Quarters

The observer who marvels at the modern soldier's ability to make himself comfortable might be surprised to learn that such talent is not really modern at all. It was said of the veteran Volunteer soldier that if he were to camp in the forest overnight, "he would sleep under his shelter-tent raised high and commodious, and on a soft bed of dry leaves," and that if he were to camp for a month in the same forest, "he would live in a log house, sleep on good clean straw, dine off a wooden table, . . . comb his whiskers before a framed looking-glass on a pine-board mantle-shelf, and look with the air of a millionaire through a foot and a half square window frame on the camped world around him."⁹⁰

Commanders appreciated the morale and health value of livable quarters. When units were to be encamped for any length of time, particularly during winter quarters, they encouraged the men to build

⁸⁹Ibid., pp. 27, 97-98.

⁹⁰William F. G. Shanks, Personal Recollections of Distinguished Generals (New York: Harper & Bros., 1866), p. 345.

huts and obtained what materials they could.⁹¹ An artillery private displayed insight into what motivates the soldier when he described the construction activity in his battery area:

Streets of the Battery presenting a lively appearance, mens' sleeves rolled up, coats off, rolling stones, chopping, making mud buildings of every fancy and description to suit the proprietors. Soldiers are not lazy when they work for their own immediate interest.⁹²

Soldiers wrote home proudly of the "shebangs" they had built.

For example:

We [four] have fixed up our quarters first-rate. Plenty of lumber was furnished and we partitioned off a cabin, about half our room, and covered it all over except a little hole to crawl into. Inside we have a berth or bunk for one, and straw in the bottom for the rest, a first-rate camp. The front room we use for sitting room, parlor, reception room, reading room, writing room, etc., a place about five feet square.⁹³

These "beavers in blue," as the rebels called them, were equally proud of their camp streets, which they decorated by transplanting pine and cedar trees and placing arches and bowers over the street entrances.⁹⁴ Some of these arches and bowers were "of the most elaborate and elegant designs, formed of the boughs of the red cedar and pine, exquisitely entwined with the bright green holly,"⁹⁵ One soldier wrote to his sister, "I tell you these embellishments make our camp look very nice, and the streets are graded so nicely,"⁹⁶

⁹¹Lyman, p. 60; Stevens, p. 177; Faller, p. 12.

⁹²Jones, p. 158.

⁹³Oliver Willcox Norton, p. 9.

⁹⁴Elake, p. 189.

⁹⁵George T. Stevens, pp. 215-16.

⁹⁶Norton, p. 38.

Only one case was found involving a commander's unexplained refusal to permit his men to build quarters. In the winter of 1864, a private recorded in his diary his bitterness that

here we are in Nashville where an abundance of everything is to be had. Thousands of feet of Government lumber lying in the pile, . . . besides hundreds of vacant houses crumbling to ruin, untenanted and unowned, which we would soon be able to convert into comfortable quarters. But no, the officers will not permit it, and here we are left to the inclemencies of the wet season, on the wet ground, They (the officers) are cozily quartered with some private family, toast their feet and drink their wines without ever a thought of us, who are engaged in a common cause with them.⁹⁷

Health and Sanitation

In the summer of 1862, a reporter described a challenge facing the Union commanders: "A subtle enemy had of late joined the Confederate cause. . . . He was known as Pestilence, and his footsteps were so soft that neither scout nor picket could bar his entrance."⁹⁸

Disease and various other ailments took their deadly toll in the Union Army. One regiment, for example, took to the field with only 600 of its 1,000 men because of sickness.⁹⁹ Another had an epidemic, with 500 men ill with measles.¹⁰⁰ Dysentery was common and rendered many men unfit for duty.¹⁰¹

There were various causes for the large sick lists. The perfunctory physical examinations early in the war allowed into the ranks "men with hernia, varicose veins, consumption, and other diseases"¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Jones, p. 273.

⁹⁸ Townsend, p. 121.

⁹⁹ De Forest, p. 27.

¹⁰⁰ Logan, pp. 109-10.

¹⁰¹ Beatty, p. 39.

¹⁰² Official Records, Series III, Vol. II, pp. 236-37.

--men who were eventually eliminated. In one recruit training camp, change of diet and wet, cold, and disagreeable weather turned the camp into "little more than one vast field-hospital."¹⁰³ Some men ate enormous quantities of the sutler's gingerbread, sweetmeats, raisins, nuts, and other "unwholesome stuff," and became ill. Such gluttony was common following payday.¹⁰⁴ Negro troops were more easily choked by dust and made ill by dampness and, in general, lacked physical hardiness.¹⁰⁵ In campaigns in the South, "northern Negroes did not bear the Southern climate as well as the white troops."¹⁰⁶

But those were lesser causes. The primary cause was the lack of understanding of--and appreciation for--the importance of sanitation. It made sanitation discipline difficult to enforce, for if the independent-minded Volunteer soldier neither understood it nor appreciated it, it couldn't be very important. A regimental commander said, "Give [the white American soldier] an order that looks utterly unreasonable, . . . or give him one which looks trifling, under which head all sanitary precautions are yet apt to rank, and you may, perhaps, find that you still have a free and independent citizen to deal with, not a soldier."¹⁰⁷

The prevailing standards of mess sanitation were revealed

¹⁰³R. W. Johnson, "War Memories," Glimpses of the Nation's Struggle, Vol. I, p. 15.

¹⁰⁴Beatty, pp. 95-96; Johnson, Vol. I, p. 439.

¹⁰⁵Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Army Life in a Black Regiment (Boston: Lee and Shepard, Publishers, 1882), p. 262.

¹⁰⁶Gray and Ropes, p. 214.

¹⁰⁷Higginson, "Thomas Wentworth Higginson Explains the Value of Trained Officers," The Blue and the Gray, Vol. I, pp. 483-84.

in a young soldier's diary as follows:

We grab our plates and cups, and wait for no second invitation. . . . We settle down, generally in groups, and the meal is soon over. Then we wash our dishes, and put them back in our haversacks. We make quick work of washing dishes. We save a piece of bread for the last, with which we wipe up everything, and then eat the dish rag. . . .

The cooks are men detailed from the ranks for that purpose. Every one smokes or chews tobacco here, so we find no fault because the cooks do both. Boxes or barrels are used as kitchen tables, and are used for seats between meals. The meat and bread are cut on them, and if a scrap is left on the table the flies go right at it and we have so many the less to crawl over us. They are never washed, but are sometimes scraped off and made to look real clean. I never yet saw the cooks wash their hands, but presume they do when they go to the brook for water.¹⁰⁸

Even in General Grant's mess at Headquarters, Army of the Potomac, sanitation took a back seat. The cook was grimy and the cooking "not as clean as it might be."¹⁰⁹

The Army did have sanitation regulations, but many officers ignored them,¹¹⁰ and the depletion in ranks continued. Yet an old, experienced officer said, "I have ridden through a regimental camp whose utterly filthy condition seemed enough to send malaria through a whole military department, and have been asked by the colonel, almost with tears in his eyes, to explain to him why his men were dying at the rate of one a day. . . . The fault was, of course, in the officers."¹¹¹

The fault was not only in the failure of some officers to en-

¹⁰⁸Lawrence Van Alstyne, "Daily Life in Camp Millington," The Blue and the Gray, Vol. I, p. 271.

¹⁰⁹Charles A. Dana, Recollections of the Civil War (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1898), p. 49.

¹¹⁰Gerrish, p. 47.

¹¹¹Letter to the editors, Army and Navy Journal (New York) September 24, 1864, p. 71.

force sanitation procedures, but also in their own standards of personal cleanliness. Apparently some officers were noticeably unclean in public, for one of New York's large newspapers, concerned about the unwashed officers seen (and smelled) about the streets in malodorous uniforms, printed an admonition to them to "KEEP CLEAN! . . . An officer is especially disgraced who cannot keep himself clean or his uniform neat. If he has not that faculty with himself he cannot make his men keep clean," ¹¹²

Each regimental and higher commander had at least one surgeon on his staff. Many commanders showed a willingness to carry out their surgeons' suggestions regarding health measures. ¹¹³ Such measures often concerned living quarters more than mess sanitation and personal sanitation. Men were forbidden to dig in their tents below the surface of the ground. ¹¹⁴ When warm weather came, after a long winter in the "shebangs," the huts were levelled, tents were pitched on ground that had not been occupied, and blankets were spread out on branches for airing. ¹¹⁵ When units were in fortifications, "the bomb-proofs of course were damp and unhealthy, so we had our tents out in the open air, and fled to the bomb-proofs when danger threatened us." ¹¹⁶

A brigade commander, with the blessing of his surgeon, drilled his troops every day in the broiling sun because "if we don't exercise

¹¹² Editorial, "Town Gossip," Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper (New York) November 19, 1864, p. 131.

¹¹³ Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXV, Part II, pp. 239-40.

¹¹⁴ Faller, p. 45.

¹¹⁵ Flake, p. 189.

¹¹⁶ Gerrish, p. 204.

and perspire abundantly we shall get poisoned with malaria and die." "[The] story seems probable," wrote a captain, "for the Eighth New Hampshire and Fifteenth Maine, which shirk drill much more than our lieutenant colonel allows us to, are both quite sickly compared with us."¹¹⁷ The same general took it calmly when one-fifth of his regiment got drunk on payday. "The men must have whiskey or die of country fever," he said. "Even quinine won't save them without whiskey."¹¹⁸

Colonel Isaac Stevens, having quelled the mutiny among his 79th Highlanders,¹¹⁹ found that one of his tasks in rebuilding discipline and morale was the enforcement of strict cleanliness in person and camp. He found that some men "were so demoralized, by homesickness or otherwise, that they could not be induced to keep themselves decent, or attend to their duties, and he made the guard take them daily to the river, and strip and scrub them with soap and brooms. Under such drastic treatment they speedily recovered their tone."¹²⁰

Chaplain's Activities

Each regiment in the Volunteer army was allowed one chaplain, appointed by the regimental commander on the vote of the field grade officers and company commanders. Required by regulations to be "a regular ordained minister of a Christian denomination," he was given the rank, pay, and allowances of a captain of cavalry.¹²¹ He was given

¹¹⁷De Forest, p. 28.

¹¹⁸Ibid., p. 29.

¹¹⁹See p. 45.

¹²⁰Hazard Stevens, p. 326.

¹²¹Regulations of 1861, p. 507.

honorable mention in the letters, diaries, and memoirs of many an officer and man--and dishonorable mention in those of many another. Although an officer without command, he should be included in any discussion of leadership, first, in regard to his own moral and spiritual leadership, and, second, in regard to how effectively his commander employed him as a staff officer.

Chaplains' duties were many and varied, depending on both their personal inclinations and their commanders' desires. One chaplain listed among his activities helping to get proper food for the sick during convalescence, providing books to read, helping men send money home after pay-day, raising money for the band's musical instruments, and inaugurating games and gymnastic exercises to enliven the routine of camp life.¹²² Another mentioned "personal interviews, including prayer and counsel with the men, in his tent or in theirs, on hospital cots, or in the field when disabled or dying."¹²³ Such chaplains earned the praise and appreciation of their men, as did those who made long marches easier by loading their horses with muskets and knapsacks of tired soldiers.¹²⁴ Chaplains who stayed in the battle line to offer troops encouragement earned their special respect.¹²⁵ One of these was the "fighting parson," who was at the scene of battle with "two revolvers and a hatchet in his belt and appeared more like a firebrand of war than a minister of peace."¹²⁶

¹²²Bradford, pp. 4-14.

¹²³Trumbull, p. 29.

¹²⁴Ibid., p. 9; Collins, p. 34.

¹²⁵Trumbull, p. 47; Daniel Hand, "Reminiscences of an Army Surgeon," Glimpses of the Nation's Struggle, Vol. I, p. 293.

¹²⁶Beatty, pp. 43-44.

A chaplain who remained on the battlefield to care for the wounded and "receive last messages to distant friends from dying soldiers" was "as brave and cool a man as I ever saw."¹²⁷

It can be stated as a general impression, however, that chaplains earned more complaints than compliments. In some regiments, after bad experiences with lazy and immoral chaplains, the officers voted not to engage another.¹²⁸ The two most common complaints were lack of personal courage and neglect of duty.¹²⁹ One of those whose effectiveness was lost was the chaplain described by an officer as a "source of entertainment":

[Our] dear little parson tells us weekly not to fear to die, but to face death bravely, as we are certain of being transported instantly to scenes of heavenly joy. Yet our little parson whenever an alarm occurs, rushes to his tent, secures his bag, and trots off in all haste to the nearest place of shelter.¹³⁰

Some chaplains seemed to feel their spiritual duty was done when they had distributed all the anti-sin leaflets provided by philanthropists back home. Few men read them; most considered them "rubbish."¹³¹ Commanders frequently assigned their chaplains "additional duties" as supervisors of the mail system and the officers' mess. Some chaplains devoted more time and interest to these duties than to their primary work.¹³² One colonel found it necessary to order his chaplain to preach,

¹²⁷Daniel Leasure, "Personal Observations and Experiences in the Pope Campaign in Virginia," Glimpses of the Nation's Struggle, Vol. I, p. 146.

¹²⁸Blake, p. 309.

¹²⁹Ibid., p. 43.

¹³⁰William Chittenden Lusk, War Letters of William Thompson Lusk (New York: By the Author), p. 84.

¹³¹Blake, p. 310.

¹³²Bradford, p. 8; Blake, pp. 36, 43; Collins, p. 34.

whereupon the chaplain "was obliged to borrow a Bible of a private in his regiment, because he did not have one in his possession."¹³³

The chaplain of a New York regiment charged the men a penny per

letter for carrying the mail. He was referred to as "One Cent by

God."¹³⁴ Men played pranks on chaplains such as these.¹³⁵ One of

their favorites was bobbing the tail of the chaplain's horse.¹³⁶

In defense of at least one of the chaplains who neglected their religious duties to see to the cooking in the officers' mess, it must be said that his colonel made it clear that first priority went to the quality of the meal, and second to the quality of the sermon.¹³⁷

Other commanders, although not religious men themselves and caring little for the chaplains as public teachers of morals, valued highly their "inspiring power over the men in the discharge of their duty as brave and faithful soldiers."¹³⁸ From a strictly military standpoint, they viewed the chaplain and religious services as good influences on the men as soldiers.¹³⁹

Whatever their motives, many commanders gave full support to religious activities. On marches, they permitted the chaplain to gather men about him and preach during halts.¹⁴⁰ In camp, they encouraged the men to build chapels from refuse lumber and canvas.¹⁴¹ Article of War 2 "earnestly recommended to all officers and soldiers

¹³³Blake, p. 37.

¹³⁴Gray and Ropes, p. 217.

¹³⁵Gerrish, p. 139.

¹³⁶Tilley, p. 203.

¹³⁷Blake, p. 43.

¹³⁸Trumbull, p. 5.

¹³⁹Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁴⁰Leasure, p. 146.

¹⁴¹Sheridan, Vol. I, p. 301.

diligently to attend divine services,"¹⁴² but did not require attendance. In some regiments, attendance at the weekly services was entirely voluntary.¹⁴³ In others, every man was required to attend.¹⁴⁴ In still others, attendance was required only in special cases where the commander desired the chaplain to talk to the men on a particular subject of importance to the discipline or morale of the command.¹⁴⁵

When in camp, some regimental commanders required the chaplain to lead the regiment in prayer at the close of the daily dress parade.¹⁴⁶ One chaplain believed this procedure "came to be valued by the regiment," but wrote,

There were a few instances in our regiment in which this innovation of prayers at dress parade disturbed the consciences of enlisted men, but the lieutenant-colonel in command quietly met these as a disciplinarian. A Catholic soldier came to him, and said he did not want to remove his hat during prayers by a Protestant chaplain, for this was a matter of conscience with him. The lieutenant-colonel's prompt and abrupt answer was: "I've nothing to do with your conscience. You can think what you please. But the chaplain is on my staff. I call on him for his duty. I call on you for your duty. When the chaplain says, at dress parade, 'Let us pray,' that is my order to you, 'Take off your hat.'¹⁴⁷ If you don't take your hat off, I'll take your head off."

Recreation and Entertainment

When units were in active campaign, recreation and entertainment presented no problem of leadership. Between the rebels, picket duty, and a deck of cards, the soldier's life was full. But when

¹⁴²Regulations of 1861, p. 485.

¹⁴³Trumbull, pp. 19-20.

¹⁴⁴George T. Stevens, pp. 9-10.

¹⁴⁵Trumbull, pp. 19-20.

¹⁴⁶Bradford, p. 13; Blake, p. 43; Trumbull, pp. 22-23.

¹⁴⁷Trumbull, pp. 22-23.

units settled into camp for any length of time, monotony also moved in. Winter quarters, although pleasant, had a demoralizing effect on the soldier.¹⁴⁸ Officers saw it necessary to break the idleness and monotony by "amusements of various kinds that were calculated to keep the men in good spirits."¹⁴⁹ Officers and men devoted themselves to "horse races, cock-fights, greased pigs and poles, and other games such as only soldiers can devise."¹⁵⁰ Baseball games between regiments and brigades were watched by great crowds of soldiers with intense interest."¹⁵¹ Gymnasium poles were put up "for development of the muscular system."¹⁵² Officers led their regiments in snowball battles:

Each party carried its flags and was led by officers chosen for the occasion. The capture of a flag, or of a number of prisoners, from an opposite party, caused great glee among the victors. A good deal of interest was excited throughout the Second division by a snowball battle between one of the Vermont regiments and the Twenty-sixth New Jersey. Both regiments formed in line of battle, each officered by its line and field officers, the latter mounted. At the signal, the battle commenced; charges and counter-charges were made, prisoners were taken on either side, the air was filled with the white missiles, and stentorian cheers went up as one or other party gained an advantage. At length victory rested with the Vermonters, and the Jersey boys surrendered the field, defeated.¹⁵³

Men were given passes to go into nearby towns and to visit friends in other regiments.¹⁵⁴ In summer months they were given passes to go

¹⁴⁸ Jones, p. 29; Beatty, p. 85.

¹⁴⁹ Sheridan, Vol. I, p. 301.

¹⁵⁰ Johnson and Buel, Vol. IV, p. 91.

¹⁵¹ George T. Stevens, p. 183.

¹⁵² Jones, p. 315.

¹⁵³ George T. Stevens, p. 183.

¹⁵⁴ Jones, p. 213.

berry-picking (a favorite pastime)¹⁵⁵ or to dam up a nearby creek "to make a swimming pond."¹⁵⁶

Summary

A generalization about the morale of the Volunteer soldier is hazardous since it concerned so many different and unrelated facets of his daily life. Furthermore, conditions varied from regiment to regiment.

It is clear, however, that the officers who enjoyed the confidence of the Volunteer soldiers were those who looked out for their men--in camp, on marches, and in battle; who showed personal courage and were at the front at critical times; and who were professionally competent, not necessarily by virtue of military book-knowledge, but by boldness, coolness, and plain common sense.

More often than not, officers did as well as they could to recognize individual merit, keep their men informed, and see to their material needs. However, in certain morale areas there were notable breakdowns in leadership. Misdirected and repeatedly futile frontal assaults against enemy earthworks took a heavy toll in morale. Rumors and uncertainty about the future were often allowed to prevail longer than necessary before information was given the men. Failure to enforce sanitation regulations resulted in illness, disease, and great depletion of units. Many chaplains failed to provide proper spiritual leadership, and many commanders failed to make proper use of their chaplains.

¹⁵⁵Ibid., p. 232.

¹⁵⁶Ibid., p. 213.

CHAPTER VI

DISCIPLINE AND LEADERS' CONDUCT

Drill

As previously mentioned, drill continued to be, throughout the war, the primary means of developing "habitual, automatic obedience to command."¹ A soldier in the 9th New York Volunteers accepted the importance of long hours of drill. In fact, he said, "Here is the secret of organization--the aim and crown of drill, to make the units one," He attached a qualification to his statement, however, for he was determined to retain the independence to make his own decisions when he thought it necessary. He said:

Too much, however, has been claimed for theoretic discipline --not enough for intelligent individual action. No remark was oftener on the lips of officers during the war than this: "Obey orders! I do your thinking for you." But that soldier is the best whose good sense tells him when to be merely a part of a machine and when not.²

Here was one of those many intelligent and independent-minded volunteers with "bayonets that think."

So important was drill considered as a means of restoring discipline that when forces went into camp for the periods between campaigns, commanders located their camps near large open fields suitable

¹See p. 39.

²R. U. Johnson and Clarence C. Buel, Battles and Leaders of the Civil War (New York: The Century Co., 1887), Vol. II, p. 557.

for drills and parades,³ and within twenty-four hours drill commands were piercing the air.⁴ One officer wrote that even when his regiment was camped within a few hundred yards of the enemy, men not required for guard or police duty were required to drill.⁵

Officers stressed attention to detail, with no deviations from the movements as set forth in Hardee's Tactics, for it was found that "the more perfectly a battalion is drilled on the parade-ground, the more quietly it can be handled in action."⁶ Conversely, units which became disorganized in battle--or seized by panic--were often those which had received insufficient drill.⁷

Inspections

Inspections were commonplace in the soldier's life, some conducted by officers of the corps of inspectors, some by commanders

³P. H. Sheridan, Personal Memoirs of P. H. Sheridan (New York: Charles L. Webster & Co., 1888), Vol. I, p. 169.

⁴Nannie M. Tilley (ed.), Federals on the Frontier: The Diary of Benjamin F. McIntyre, 1862-1864 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1963), p. 46.

⁵G. A. Armes, Ups and Downs of an Army Officer (Washington, D. C., 1900), p. 130.

⁶Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Army Life in a Black Regiment (Boston: Lee and Shepard, Publishers, 1882), p. 46.

⁷U. S., War Department, The War of the Rebellion: Official Records, hereafter referred to as Official Records (Washington, 1880-1901), Series I, Vol. XL, Part I, p. 93; John Gibbon, Personal Recollections of the Civil War (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1928), pp. 227-30.

themselves.⁸ Inspectors not only examined weapons, equipment, clothing, quarters, cook's tent, and records, but also required commanders to drill and maneuver their units.⁹ Men standing guard on the picket line were inspected.¹⁰ In some camps, the sanitary conditions were inspected.¹¹ In others, they were neglected, as it was brought out in the previous chapter.

Although inspections by higher headquarters were never pleasant for the Volunteer commanders, some "welcomed them as the very best means of improvement for all under [their] care." Others, however, attempted to dodge them, begging off because they had just come in from picket duty, were just going out on picket, had just moved camp, or were a day too late with their last requisition for cartridges.¹²

A Volunteer captain's letter to his wife described his inspection duties as officer of the day:

I am regimental officer of the day. My duties consist largely in wearing a sash diagonally and in keeping quiet. Also I am solemnly bound to go twice a day to the guard tent. At sight of my sublime approach the lieutenant or sergeant of the guard roars, "Officer of the day!—Turn out the guard!"

Immediately the guard bustles forth, seizes the guns from the stocks in front of the tent, and comes to a shoulder. When I am within a few feet the sergeant commands, "Present arms!"

⁸ Henry Norton (ed.), Deeds of Daring: History of the 8th New York Volunteer Cavalry (Norwich, N. Y.: Chanango Telegraph Printing House, 1889), pp. 107-108; Michael H. Fitch, Echoes of the Civil War (New York: R. F. Fenno & Co., 1905), p. 121; Rufus R. Dawes, Service with the Sixth Wisconsin Volunteers (Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1962), p. 242.

⁹ *Armes*, p. 30.

¹⁰ Fitch, pp. 120-21

¹¹ Fitch, p. 121.

¹² Thomas Wentworth Higginson, "Thomas Wentworth Higginson Explains the Value of Trained Officers," The Blue and the Gray, ed. Henry Steele Commager (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950), Vol. I, p. 485.

I raise the forefinger of my right hand to my cap and then drop it in an impressive manner which it would terrify you to see.

Again the sergeant shouts, "Shoulder arms! Order arms! Stack arms! Without doubling, right face! Break ranks, march!"

The soldiers struggle back into the tent, and I give an order about something, if I can think of one. This ceremony must be performed twice a day, or the nation would go to the bowwows.¹³

Although the captain above apparently handled his inspections rather lightly, many officers inspected with great care and attention to details. One of these was a brigadier general who said, "These details may appear trivial, but it is only necessary to remark that the military profession is made up of trivialities and the enforcement of trivial things is fully justified by the results produced--obedience to orders, discipline and military efficiency."¹⁴ The same philosophy was held by the cavalry officer who checked to see that his men groomed their horses one hour--"not fifty-nine minutes, but sixty full minutes."¹⁵

Relationship between Discipline and Soldiers'

Regard for Officers

The following examples indicate that the discipline imposed by officers who were well regarded by their men was strengthened by the self-imposed discipline which the men, themselves, applied:

1) Commenting on the precision with which the men of his brigade executed the drill commands of the brigade commander, a Volunteer captain said:

¹³ John William De Forest, A Veteran's Adventures, ed. James H. Croushore (New Haven, n.p., 1946), p. 12.

¹⁴ Gibbon, p. 38.

¹⁵ Norton, p. 107.

It is a fine sight to see the brigade in his hands; the five great regiments moving together like an enormous machine; folding into column, forming square, recovering column, deploying into line; everything going at once in a sublimely smooth, sure, massive fashion. The general is much respected here for his knowledge of martial matters, and for his simplicity, earnestness and uprightness of character. The soldiers laugh over his oddities and like him the more for them.¹⁶

2) In the diary of the regimental historian of the 13th Massachusetts Volunteers is found a comment about a commander's conduct on the march. This one concerns rest halts:

There was one thing we were thankful to the colonel for, and that was his freedom from nonsense on such occasions. No "right-facing," no "right-dressing," no "stacking arms" to waste valuable minutes, but "get all the rest you can, boys," and when the order was given to "forward," each man took his place in line without confusion or delay. . . .¹⁷

3) In chapter III, "Leadership Problems in Building the Volunteer Army," appeared the diary entry of the regimental commander of the Third Ohio Regiment. He had made a series of mistakes in the handling of his men (including strapping one of them to a tree) and had incurred their hatred. He felt greatly discouraged, but was still determined to instill discipline in his regiment. He ended the entry with the hope "that soon all will feel as kindly toward me as [the honest, sensible, good-looking boy on the color guard does]."¹⁸ Nine months later, in his diary, the colonel wrote the sequel to that story:

Many, perhaps most, of the boys of the regiment disliked me thoroughly. They thought me too strict, too rigid in the

¹⁶De Forest, p. 11.

¹⁷Charles E. Davis, "Life With the Thirteenth Massachusetts," The Blue and the Gray, Vol. I, p. 277.

¹⁸See p. 44.

enforcement of orders; but now they are, without exception, my fast friends. During the battle of Chaplin Hills, while the enemy's artillery was playing upon us with terrible effect, I ordered them to lie down. The shot, shell, and canister came thick as hail, hissing, exploding, and tearing up the ground around us. There was a universal cry from the boys that I should lie down also; but I continued to walk up and down the line, watching the approaching enemy, and replied to their entreaties: "No, it is my time to stand guard now, and I will not lie down."

Meeting Captain Loomis yesterday, he said: "Do you know you captured a regiment at Chaplin Hills?" "I do not." "Yes, you captured the Third [Ohio]. You have not a man now who wouldn't die for you."¹⁹

If the captain was correct, these men were willing not only to accept the colonel's discipline but to forgive his past injustices as well-- because he had shown them personal courage in battle.

4) Even the chaplain's steadying influence was greater when the men regarded him well, and the first test he had to meet was personal courage. A chaplain wrote:

A chaplain had a duty to inspire men for their service for their country. If he was himself a coward, or seemed unready to face a soldier's perils, no words from him could have weight with his men. His influence for good was destroyed among them. If, on the other hand, their chaplain shared their dangers bravely, his men gave him more than full credit for his courage and fidelity, and were the readier to do their duty under his direct appeals.²⁰

Discipline and the Regular Army Officer

Making the Adjustment

Establishing discipline was the main problem facing the Regular Army officers who were assigned to command Volunteer units, but it

¹⁹ John Beatty, Memoirs of a Volunteer (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1946), pp. 139-40.

²⁰ H. Clay Trumbull, War Memoirs of a Chaplain (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898), p. 8.

wasn't their only problem. They had an adjustment to make. The harsh discipline and rough language often used toward Regular soldiers was out of the question in Volunteer units.²¹ Methods they had used in dealing with Regulars, many of them men "not of the highest type or the best informed," produced nothing but woe when applied to volunteers. They "worked, fretted, and swore," and some of them were thoroughly hated by the intelligent, free-thinking Americans whom they were trying to mold into their ideas of a soldier.²² Some of them were inveterate martinets,²³ and were never able to make the adjustment. In fact, a Volunteer general said, "To know how to command volunteers was explicitly recognized by our leading generals as a quality not found in many regular officers, and worth noting when found."²⁴

The majority did adjust, however, although they continued to be strict disciplinarians. "After awhile, light began to dawn on them that they were beginning to succeed [in their efforts to build discipline]."²⁵ And as the men "compared their own soldierly appearance and military abilities" with those of men in other units, their prejudice against Regular officers gradually wore off.²⁶

A General Makes a Discovery about Leadership

For some Regular officers, the transition was a learning process.

²¹ Jacob D. Cox, Military Reminiscences of the Civil War (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), Vol. I, pp. 166-67.

²² Gibbon, pp. 10-11.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Cox, pp. 166-67.

²⁵ Gibbon, pp. 10-11.

²⁶ Gibbon, p. 40.

Brigadier General John Gibbon, inspecting the brigade guard-mounting one morning, was shocked at the untidy appearance of the majority of the men. He found three men outstanding in appearance and bearing. He had them excused from guard duty and directed they be given passes to be absent from camp for twenty-four hours. The pass was considered a great privilege since it was blackberry time, and a soldier could pick a lot of blackberries in twenty-four hours. At next morning's guard-mounting, the improvement in appearance of the troops was "marvellous." Everyone wanted to go "blackberrying." The system was made permanent, and in a few days the brigade "had as clean and soldierly looking a guard as any Regular could desire to see."

The general stated in his memoirs that he "had made a discovery" which was of infinite value to him thereafter. "With these men 'the hope of reward was far more powerful than the fear of punishment' and thenceforward I acted on that principle."²⁷

Volunteers Comment about Their Regular Army Officers

A veteran of the Eighth New York Cavalry described Colonel Benjamin Davis, the new regimental commander, as

a military man clear through, the right man in the right place. He was a strict disciplinarian, and brought the regiment down under the regular army regulations.

Some of the boys thought he was too severe with them. . . . Previous to Davis' taking command the boys were put in the guard house for punishment. That suited them too well. There would sometimes be twenty-five in at one time. Colonel Davis' mode of punishment was to make a soldier carry a rail on his shoulder and walk a ring until he gave orders for him to stop."²⁸

²⁷Gibbon, p. 38.

²⁸Norton, p. 24.

A Volunteer captain, sitting as a member of a court, described the arrival of the president:

He is a lieutenant-colonel of a New York regiment, a pretty little fellow of not above two and twenty, with a boyish face and grave black eyes. The fact that he is a West Pointer explains his early advancement. He comes in blushing, with his handkerchief held to his mouth, like a bashful girl at her first party. But he has been the disciplinarian and drillmaster of his regiment, and he is familiar with the articles of war and the procedure of courts-martial. It would be a prodigious advantage to us if we could head all our volunteer regiments with West Pointers.²⁹

Said of Brigadier General Alexander Hays, a West Point officer given command of a Volunteer brigade: "The general now devoted all his time, talents, and energy to bring good order and discipline out of the confusion in which he found his brigade and to put fight into it. He drilled, punished, coaxed, scolded, and stormed at it," (Italics mine.)³⁰

Again recalling Colonel Isaac Stevens and his mutinous 79th Highlanders, the reader may remember that the colonel, in his efforts to rebuild discipline, "was especially strict with the officers."³¹ Following is a significant comment of one of those officers:

His advent among us was inaugurated by an order for us young officers to leave the pleasant rooms we occupied when /the former colonel/ was with us, and to return to our tents. This was as it should be; and other strict measures toward officers and men show that he is the right sort of a commander for a Regiment like ours, requiring a strong firm hand to govern it.³²

²⁹De Forest, p. 44.

³⁰"Brigadier-General Alexander Hays," United States Service Magazine, Vol. V (July-December, 1864), p. 270.

³¹See p. 46.

³²William Chittenden Lusk, War Letters of William Thompson Lusk (New York: By the Author), pp. 70-71.

Military Justice

General

Although in today's Army, severe corrective action is sometimes essential, "the threat or possibility of punishment is not emphasized in our concept of discipline."³³ Quite to the contrary in the Volunteer army, the threat was both emphasized and frequently carried out. Punishment was second only to drill as a builder of discipline.

One Volunteer captain, however, after a period of court-martial duty, declared that drilling was "mere sport in comparison." He was one of the many inexperienced officers who sat as members of courts-- and made many mistakes while at it, but took the responsibility seriously.³⁴

Types of Punishments

Sentences which a court-martial could legally impose against a soldier (depending on the offense and the jurisdiction of the court) were death; confinement; confinement on bread and water diet; solitary confinement; hard labor; ball and chain; lashes (not to exceed fifty); forfeiture of pay and allowances; discharges from service; reprimands; and, when noncommissioned officers, reduction to the ranks.³⁵ There

³³U. S. Army Command and General Staff College, Reference Book 27-1, Legal Basis of Command (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1 September, 1964), p. 3.

³⁴De Forest, pp. 29-30.

³⁵U. S., War Department, Revised United States Army Regulations of 1861, hereafter referred to as Regulations of 1861 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1863), pp. 126, 499.

were other sentences which were illegal but, nevertheless, often imposed, not only by courts-martial but by company commanders as well. Some of them were humiliating; some were also cruel and painful. A relatively mild punishment was that of carrying a log back and forth on one's shoulder all day. At sunrise it weighed about twelve pounds. By sunset, it had not grown in size, but "had gained one hundred and eighty-eight pounds. . . ." ³⁶ Men were required to stand on barrels wearing signs announcing their offenses ("COWARD" or "THIEF"). ³⁷ As a more severe but common punishment, men were tied to tree limbs by their thumbs, with their toes barely touching the ground. After a few hours of this the soldier "was exceedingly apt to heed the words of his officers when next they spoke to him." ³⁸ In artillery units, offenders were tied to the spare wheel of a caisson by their hands and feet. If the offense was serious, the huge wheel was given a quarter turn, placing the man horizontal and causing the cords to cut even deeper into the flesh due to the weight of his body. The variety of such punishments was limited only by the ingenuity of the commander concerned or of the president of the court. But most punishments had one element in common--humiliation. Commanders evidently believed that humiliation was as strong a deterrent as pain and discomfort, since punishments were habitually carried out where all could see. This technique apparently served its purpose, but at the same time it

³⁶ Frank Wilkeson, Recollections of a Private Soldier in the Army of the Potomac (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1893), pp. 35-36.

³⁷ Theodore Lyman, Meade's Headquarters, 1863-1865, ed. George R. Agassiz (Boston: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1922), p. 243.

³⁸ Wilkeson, p. 35.

caused some resentment. Although men became hardened to seeing such things (especially with the advent of the recalcitrant bounty-jumper), many described it as "cruel despotism and tyranny"³⁹ and "horribly brutal and needlessly severe."⁴⁰

Although officers were not subjected to physical punishment, they, too, were subject to public humiliation. A company commander was censured in orders read at parade for failure of himself and his officers to attend a required formation.⁴¹ An officer who observed the proceedings agreed that strict discipline was necessary to the efficiency of the regiment but considered the severity of the punishment "unnecessary and a hardship." The company commander thought so, too, and resigned. Even officers cashiered from the service suffered one final indignity. Their offenses and punishment were publicized in the newspapers of their home states.⁴²

In contrast to the more commonly held concept of punishments was that of a white colonel commanding a colored regiment. Recognizing the soldier's need for self respect, he held that "a soldier without self-respect is worthless." In dealing out punishments, he carefully avoided the brutal and arbitrary. He wrote:

A system of light punishments, rigidly administered, . . .
had more weight with them than any amount of angry severity.
. . . By adhering to this, and constantly appealing to their

³⁹Jenkin L. Jones, An Artilleryman's Diary (Madison, Wisc.: Wisconsin History Commission, 1914), p. 178.

⁴⁰Tilley, p. 46.

⁴¹George K. Collins, Memoirs of the 149th Regt. N. Y. Vol. Inf. (Syracuse, N. Y.: By the Author, 1891), p. 33.

⁴²Regulations of 1861, p. 498.

pride as soldiers and their sense of duty, we were able to maintain a high standard of discipline, . . . and to get rid, almost entirely, of the more degrading class of punishments, --standing on barrels, tying up by the thumbs, and the ball and chain.⁴³

Here was a situation in which the commander, recognizing the nature and background of those he led, saw their two great needs--pride and self respect. Appealing to them through these needs, which motivated them strongly, he was able to achieve discipline with a minimum amount of punishment.

Major Disciplinary Problems and Leaders' Actions

Straggling on the March

Among the major disciplinary problems facing Volunteer officers, probably the one which most frequently tested their leadership was straggling from the ranks during marches. There is little doubt that, had some marches been better planned and managed, much of the problem would not have existed. But even on those that were well conducted, some straggling seemed bound to occur, particularly as the distance became greater and the sun hotter.

Methods of preventing straggling varied. One common method used by officers was constant scolding of those who lagged.⁴⁴ Drummers beat a rhythm to make the next step easier. Some mounted officers dismounted and walked at the head of their commands. Others rode up and down the line, giving orders to yell and setting the

⁴³Higginson, Army Life in a Black Regiment, pp. 259-60.

⁴⁴Beatty, p. 71.

example of uproar. In the account of one division's forced march, a lieutenant colonel "ran foot races in his big boots with a private, to make the soldiers laugh at his buffoonery. . . . The company officers carried the rifles of tottering men, and hastened from straggler to straggler, cheering, ordering, and threatening, but, I think, never striking; for no one could find it in his heart to maltreat poor fellows who were almost at the last gasp with pain and fatigue."⁴⁵ Many commanders saw the power of music for beguiling weary men from their misery. An old artilleryman who had seen it work many times said, "Take a regiment of infantry that has been marched until from exhaustion it seems about to crumble to pieces-- and let a band strike up: how quickly all is changed, men who could scarcely walk before, . . . will seem a mighty body . . . and one pair of feet."⁴⁶

One brigade commander hit upon a rather bizarre technique which, nevertheless, proved effective. His brigade was on a long, hard march the day before it was to engage the enemy. During a halt early in the march, he passed on to the men the compliments of General McClellan regarding their marching, and added that while he knew they would march well and without straggling, he wanted them to do more than that by hooting and jeering at every man they saw along the road straggling from his command. After paying the men one more compliment of his own regarding their fighting ability, he resumed the march. Soon stragglers from the commands in front of the brigade began to appear

⁴⁵De Forest, pp. 101-102.

⁴⁶Editorial, "The Care and Discipline of Troops," Army and Navy Journal (New York), October 8, 1864, p. 484.

along the road. The general ordered an advance guard placed in front of the brigade, with the drum corps following the advance guard. The stragglers were gathered up and forced to march in front of the advance guard. The drums played "The Rogue's March" while the men laughed, jeered, and tongue-lashed the stragglers to their hearts' content. According to the general, "a strong spirit of opposition to straggling was created and it became an honorable ambition to remain in the ranks, instead of constantly inventing pretexts to fall out."⁴⁷

It appears that the success of the general's mass psychology lay with the manner of his appeal. He appealed to their personal and unit pride and, perhaps just as importantly, to their youthful sense of fun and mischief. Through the skill of his approach, he transferred to the men his own resentment toward straggling. It was no longer a case of a commander's crusade against stragglers. It was their crusade. They despised stragglers. The soldier's inherent delight in poking fun did the rest.

Some commanders used punitive measures (that is, company punishment and courts-martials) to discourage straggling.⁴⁸ One general of artillery had offenders forced along by tying them to the cannon.⁴⁹

Only one instance was found involving straggling by officers. A regimental commander complained that some of his officers, "instead of pushing along resolutely at the head of their command, . . . fall back and get into an ambulance." He added that their troops had no confidence in them and that their presence rendered a whole company worthless.⁵⁰

⁴⁷Gibbon, pp. 74-75.

⁴⁸Henry N. Blake, Three Years in the Army of the Potomac (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1865), p. 192.

⁴⁹Tilley, p. 46.

⁵⁰Beatty, p. 132.

Straggling in Battle

Cowardly straggling during battle was another serious and widespread problem.⁵¹ Stragglers, more commonly called skulkers, sneaked away from their regiments during battle or while marching to battle, then stealthily reappeared when the fighting was over. Some of them skulked through the woods to the rear where they sat down and boiled coffee. Hence, they were also insultingly referred to as "coffee boilers." Others were bold and open about it and walked along the roads behind the line of battle, always ready with a feigned illness or some other pretext if challenged.⁵² Although bounty-jumpers and paid substitutes had no monopoly on such cowardly conduct, they did provide a large share of the offenders during 1864-65.⁵³

Although commanders frequently had skulkers court-martialed (a few of them were tried and shot),⁵⁴ many attempted to prevent skulking by posting mounted guards in the rear to seek out the cowards and chase them back into battle.⁵⁵ Dismounted sentinels were also posted along the roads to challenge anyone not obviously wounded. If a man had no blood to show, the sentinel cocked his rifle, brought it

⁵¹ Beatty, pp. 222-23.

⁵² Wilkeson, pp. 189-90; George A. Townsend, Rustics in Rebellion: A Yankee Reporter on the Road to Richmond, 1861-1865 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1950), pp. 134-35.

⁵³ Wilkeson, pp. 189-90.

⁵⁴ Beatty, p. 185; Jones, p. 223; Gibbon, pp. 223-24; M. A. De Wolfe Howe (ed.), Marching with Sherman: Passages from the Letters and Campaign Diaries of Henry Hitchcock (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1927), p. 87.

⁵⁵ Townsend, pp. 134-35.

to his shoulder, and ordered him to return to his regiment.⁵⁶ The sentinel meant business, since his commander had very likely instructed him to shoot, bayonet, or bash in the skull of any skulker who tried to get past him.⁵⁷

Diary accounts indicate that a common and dreaded punishment for skulkers was shaving their heads and drumming them out of camp. One onlooker said, "Death and oblivion would have been less severe and infinitely more desirable."⁵⁸ General Sheridan, as a division commander, considered it an effective punishment, and told how he used it to deter straggling by officers:

During the engagement there had been little straggling, and my list of missing was small and legitimate; still, it was known that a very few had shirked their duty, and an example was necessary. Among this small number were four officers who, it was charged, had abandoned their colors and regiments. When their guilt was clearly established, and as soon as an opportunity occurred, I caused the whole division to be formed in a hollow square, closed in mass, and had the four officers marched to the centre, where, telling them that I would not humiliate any officer or soldier by requiring them to touch their disgraced swords, I compelled them to deliver theirs up to my colored servant, who also cut from their coats every insignia of rank. Then, after there had been read to the command an order from army headquarters dismissing the four from the service, the scene was brought to a close by drumming the cowards out of camp. It was a mortifying spectacle, but from that day no officer in that division ever abandoned his colors.⁵⁹

One officer skulker who apparently escaped the drumming-out ceremony, but who unknowingly provided amusement for an artillery private and his comrades, was the infantry colonel who went into the woods, prepared a mixture of mud and gunpowder, and rubbed it on his hands and face. The private, who spied the "howling farce" while

⁵⁶Wilkeson, pp. 58-59.

⁵⁷Blake, pp. 151-52, 279-80.

⁵⁸Beatty, p. 223.

⁵⁹Sheridan, Vol I, pp. 240-41.

on an errand to the rear to fill canteens, said that "instantly [the colonel] was transformed from a trembling coward who lurked behind a tree into an exhausted brave taking a well-earned repose. I laughed silently at the spectacle, . . . and then rejoined my comrades, and together we laughed at and then drank to the health of the blonde [sic] warrior."⁶⁰

Pillaging

The following statement, found in a current field manual, was just as true one hundred years ago as it is today:

As men acquire loot, they discard needed equipment which results in an overall loss of combat efficiency. No matter how well-trained or well-disciplined a unit may be, troops will loot unless precautions are taken in advance.⁶¹

And loot they did, even in spite of precautions. When operating in rebel country, armies foraged on the land, and killing of animals and raiding of pantries by appointed foraging parties was authorized. However, private foraging was plunder or pillage, and it was forbidden.⁶² But forbidding it didn't prevent it. Sherman forbade it, yet his soldiers pillaged all the way to the sea. The only writer who denies this is Sherman himself, who wrote that such acts were "exceptional and incidental."⁶³

⁶⁰Wilkeson, p. 95; This soldier's reaction of pure amusement is unusual. Most cases of officer cowardice aroused anger and scorn in the enlisted man. Had the colonel been an artilleryman and an officer in his own organization, the soldier probably would have viewed the incident with considerably less humor.

⁶¹U. S., Department of the Army, Field Manual 31-50, Combat in Built-up and Fortified Areas (Washington, March, 1964), p. 30.

⁶²Sheridan, pp. 174-76.

⁶³Ibid., pp. 182-83.

Officers who made an honest effort to prevent pillage found it a frustrating task. The soldier simply could see nothing wrong in taking from the enemy anything he could get his hands on. One lanky Westerner was incredulous when informed that private foraging was not permitted--"not even taking a chicken." When finally convinced by an officer that it was true, he exclaimed in disgust, "Well, then, what in _____ is the use in being a soldier!"⁶⁴

Northern public opinion made the officer's task even more difficult. Since discipline in respect to looting was construed as friendliness to rebels, some officers were deterred from enforcing it.⁶⁵ And the press made matters worse by urging soldiers to help themselves to rebel property.⁶⁶

The foregoing obstacles are not brought out as excuses for officers who made little or no effort to control pillaging. However, they do at least partially explain why those officers who did try to control it were never really successful. They could only "mitigate the evil."⁶⁷ As a Volunteer general said:

In vain did officers storm and swear; in vain was the sabre used freely over the heads of the offenders who were caught; in vain, even, did the provost guard of one division turn about and fire ball-cartridge, from the road, at fellows who deliberately left the ranks to go across the fields.

⁶⁴Charles J. Allen, "Some Accounts and Recollections of the Operations Against the City of Mobile and Its Defenses, 1864 and 1865," Glimpses of the Nation's Struggle, ed. The Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, Minnesota Commandery (St. Paul, Minn.: St. Paul Book and Stationery Co., 1887), Vol. I, p. 87.

⁶⁵Cox, Vol. II, p. 306.

⁶⁶Lusk, pp. 177-78.

⁶⁷Cox, Vol. II, pp. 233-34; Howe, p. 134.

General Couch [corps commander] was outraged; he instructed each division commander to assemble a court-martial for the trial of these offenders; and soon, every evening, after coming into camp, three courts were in session in the Second Corps, with sheep-stealers before them, and sharp and summary were the punishments inflicted; but all to no purpose--the killing went on as bad as ever.⁶⁸

The diary of a soldier campaigning in Alabama tells of a division commander coming upon a squad of unauthorized foragers killing hogs. He rode "in great fury back and forth, endeavoring to punish the guilty parties and put a stop to it. He tied up several men by the limbs all night, but the boys got their hogs. He is getting unpopular very fast with his men."⁶⁹

Another division commander discovered the skins of some sheep in a field in which his troops had bivouacked. Unable to find either the mutton or the culprits, he arbitrarily deducted one day's rations from the command as punishment.⁷⁰ This action stands out as one of the rare cases of arbitrary mass punishment found during this study.

General Jacob Cox, a Volunteer officer, analyzed the phenomenon of pillaging. He expressed the belief that one reason it can so easily get out of control is that it is difficult to recognize the point where legitimate foraging ends and pillaging begins. He stated:

The tendency of war to make men relapse into barbarism becomes most evident when an army is living in any degree upon the enemy's country. . . . The habit of disregarding rights of property grows apace. The legitimate exercise of the rules of war is not easily distinguished from their abuse.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Francis A. Walker, History of the Second Army Corps (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1886), pp. 134-35.

⁶⁹ Jones, pp. 119-20.

⁷⁰ Blake, p. 146.

⁷¹ Cox, Vol. II, pp. 233-34.

An officer on Sherman's staff also analyzed the problem of preventing pillaging; however, his approach was less scholarly. He termed the task "difficult if not impossible" because "the mischief is not done under the eye of officers, and five or ten minutes is long enough to do irreparable harm."⁷²

Desertion

There can be no cause so just or so beloved that war in its behalf will not be attended by desertion among its defenders.⁷³

Statistically speaking, for every eleven enlistments throughout the war there was one desertion.⁷⁴ The causes were several. Early in the war, men were ignorant of their responsibilities. When they discovered soldiering was no picnic, disillusionment set in and they did what seemed natural; they went home. Some men deserted because of dissatisfaction with their officers. Many (and the number will never be known) saw greener fields elsewhere. They deserted their units, joined other regiments, and served honorably. In 1864-65 came the bounty-jumpers, the professional deserters. One of these men, under a four year sentence in prison, confessed to having "jumped the bounty" thirty-two times.⁷⁵

The most likely time for bounty-jumpers to desert was during their first tour of picket duty. Knowing this, some commanders threw

⁷² Howe, p. 134.

⁷³ Official Records, Series III, Vol. V, p. 670.

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 109, 600.

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 678, 725.

a cordon of cavalry outside their own picket lines--a case of sentinels watching sentinels.⁷⁶

Desertion was punishable by death. Although the number of recaptured deserters actually executed was relatively small, elaborately staged executions were occasionally carried out as examples for others. In such ceremonies, brigades or whole divisions were formed on three sides to observe. The condemned was forced to sit on his coffin as the order was read and the firing detail made its preparations.⁷⁷ A brigade commander, describing the effect of one such ceremony on his men, said, "The moral effect was very great, for our men were so intelligent that they fully appreciated the judicial character of the act, and the imposing solemnity of the . . . execution made the impression all the more profound." He added that the incident was followed by increased industry and devotion to duty and "gave a new tone to the whole command."⁷⁸

An artillery captain hit upon an idea for nipping desertion in the bud at the outset of a man's enlistment. Sent home to Philadelphia in 1862 to recruit replacements, he found that after the recruits were sworn and collected their bounty from the city of Philadelphia, 20 per cent of them immediately deserted. He had the feeling that during the mass administering of the oath, some of the men were remaining silent at the concluding words "So help me God."

⁷⁶Johnson and Buel, p. 93.

⁷⁷Beatty, p. 185; Cox, Vol. I, pp. 149-52; Theodore Gerrish, Army Life: A Private's Reminiscences of the Civil War (Portland, Maine: Hoyt, Fogg & Donham, 1882), pp. 124-28.

⁷⁸Cox, Vol. I, pp. 149-52.

From then on, when he came to that portion of the oath, he stepped before each man and made him say--individually, loudly, and distinctly--, "So help me God." Desertions dropped markedly. "One man has since admitted to me that if I had not forced him to repeat the solemn words he would have deserted with a friend of his," ⁷⁹

Sectional Differences in Discipline

By the usual outward signs of discipline, the Army of the East was better disciplined than the Army of the West. The Easterners, referred to by their Western comrades as "paper collars and red tape," ⁸⁰ were particular about their dress and the appearance of their camps. They drilled incessantly and had frequent parades. Relatively speaking, they were strict in observance of military courtesy. ⁸¹

The Westerner "had more care for his rifle than his uniform, paid more attention to his cartridge-box than his carriage, and heartily despised drill and parade." He had less respect for the "proprieties" in his relations with officers. ⁸² He was an incorrigible plunderer. ⁸³ Grant said there was "nothing of the sort out West, in the way of discipline and organization." ⁸⁴

Yet where is the historian who will say that one army was better than the other? One writer of that day who refused to do so said,

⁷⁹Letter to the Editors, Army and Navy Journal (New York), January 14, 1865, p. 326.

⁸⁰John M. Paver, What I Saw from 1861 to 1864: Personal Recollections of John M. Paver (Indianapolis: Scott-Miller Co., n.d.), p. 83.

⁸¹Shanks, p. 334.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³De Forest, p. 156.

⁸⁴Lyman, p. 84.

"Any comparison which would assert the superiority of either army in endurance, courage, or fighting qualities would be invidious and untrue, for the men of both sections fought with equal effect and won equal honor."⁸⁵

Summary

In conclusion, it is evident that the following factors, more than any others, shaped the discipline of the Volunteer army:

1) Drill and inspections (conducted, on the part of many officers, with great attention to details).

2) Firm disciplinary measures of officers with Regular Army backgrounds (effective in spite of the attendant adjustment problems of some of these officers).

3) The extra measure of willing obedience which men gave to officers whom they regarded highly.

4) Punishment.

Commanders often dealt with disciplinary problems without resorting to punishment. However, punishments did play a major part in the scheme of things, and were frequently accompanied by some form of humiliation.

Pillage and desertion were two major disciplinary problems which remained unchecked in spite of officers' efforts.

By the conventional outward appearances, Eastern soldiers were considerably more disciplined than those in the West.

⁸⁵Shanks, p. 333.

CHAPTER VII

ESPRIT DE CORPS AND LEADERS' CONDUCT

General

Esprit de corps is the feeling of loyalty, pride, and enthusiasm men have about their unit. It is enhanced by unit identification.¹ In the Civil War "the unit" was the regiment. The soldier was a member of a company, brigade, division, and corps, and he was often proud of them, but his life and fortunes revolved around his regiment. As General Sherman put it, the regiment was "the family."² This chapter deals with officers' use of certain commonly recognized esprit builders. In most cases, officers' actions were directed toward enhancing regimental esprit.

Unit Recognition

Just as commanders often included recognition of individual officers and men in their official after-action battle reports, they also gave praise to subordinate units.³ In addition, they published general orders for the specific purpose of commending the troops in

¹U. S., Department of the Army, Field Manual 22-100, Military Leadership, pp. 39-40.

²William T. Sherman, Memoirs of General William T. Sherman (2d ed., rev.; New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1886), Vol. II, p. 385.

³Sherman, Vol. I, pp. 235-242.

their commands, not only for gallant conduct in action,⁴ but also for such achievements as standing first in the division in drill, cleanliness, or condition of weapons.⁵ Letters and diaries indicate that these written compliments from their commanders gave them a sense of pride in their regiments.⁶

Personally delivered compliments from commanders were similarly appreciated. Commanders often rode into camps of subordinate commands following a battle to pass among the men and compliment them on their conduct.⁷ Some commanders made stirring speeches. One soldier, whose company had received such a visit by the regimental commander, wrote that "we all appreciated such words of praise, coming from so brave and brilliant an officer."⁸

In one division, following a competition to determine the best-drilled regiment, the division commander paid the winning regiment what must have been the supreme compliment. A soldier in that regiment wrote home proudly that "we have earned a good reputation and we mean to keep it. We are now to have the post of honor and of danger--that of rifle skirmishers to be thrown out in advance of the army in action."⁹

⁴William Chittenden Lusk, War Letters of William Thompson Lusk (New York: By the Author), p. 209.

⁵Rufus R. Dawes, Service with the Sixth Wisconsin Volunteers (Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1962), p. 245.

⁶Dawes, p. 245; G. A. Armes, Ups and Downs of an Army Officer (Washington, D. C., 1900), pp. 126-27.

⁷John Beatty, Memoirs of a Volunteer (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1946), p. 98; Theodore Gerrish, Army Life: A Private's Reminiscences of the Civil War (Portland, Maine: Hoyt, Fogg & Donham, 1882), pp. 79-80.

⁸Gerrish, pp. 79-80.

⁹Oliver Willcox Norton, Army Letters, 1861-1865 (Chicago: C. L. Deming, 1903), p. 33.

Confidence in Unit

Training varied greatly from regiment to regiment. Some men expressed confidence in their regiments and talked about how well they and their comrades had done at target practice and skirmishing with blank ammunition.¹⁰ In other units, men complained about too much drill for dress parade and too little for the field.¹¹ Their apprehension was justifiable, for they went into battle well trained at marching but "unable to shoot rapidly or with effect."¹²

A battlefield action of a brigade commander, although resulting in no contact with the enemy, increased his troops' confidence--confidence which was to serve them well later. The brigade was at work building a fort and clearing the area around it when a report was received from the picket line about a mile in advance that the enemy were advancing in heavy force. The colonel placed his troops under arms, then gave them a surprise. Instead of having them take positions inside the fort, he led them out nearly to the picket line, "deployed them on a commanding position on both sides of the road, and coolly awaited the attack." This movement, "so promptly but deliberately made, visibly raised the confidence and morale of the troops; and when, the alarm proving unfounded, they marched back to camp, they felt able and eager to encounter the enemy on equal ground."¹³

¹⁰Norton, pp. 16, 21.

¹¹Norton, p. 202; Frank Wilkeson, Recollections of a Private Soldier in the Army of the Potomac (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1893), pp. 22-23.

¹²Norton, p. 202.

¹³Hazard Stevens, The Life of Isaac Ingalls Stevens (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1901), Vol. II, pp. 328-29.

Just as success in battle breeds confidence in the unit, reverses will lower it. To what extent they will lower it depends partly on the conduct of officers. If officers show confidence, calmness, and determination, they will exert a steadying influence. If they show worry, gloom, and fear, the command will take on the same attitude.¹⁴ The following account by a Volunteer captain tells what happened to a brigade after it had been soundly repulsed by the Confederates at the Battle of Cold Harbor, Virginia. The example set by the officers--and the effects of this example on esprit and discipline--speak for themselves.

The Sixth Corps, one of the best in the Army of the Potomac, is lying near us. They seem to be badly demoralized by the severe service and the disastrous battles of the campaigns in Virginia. Their guns are dirty; their camps are disorderly clutters of shelter tents; worst of all, the men are disrespectful to their officers. I heard a private say to a lieutenant, "I'll slap your face if you say that again."

These fellows lurk around our clean, orderly camps and steal our clean, bright rifles. I went over to the nearest brigade to complain of this and to recover lost ordnance stores.

"Looking for guns, Cap?" drawled a sergeant. "Well, if you find a clean gun in this camp, you claim it. We hain't had one in our brigade since Cold Harbor."

The camp astonished me by its contrast to ours, with its regular company streets, each one headed and overlooked by the tent of its officers. Here there were no boundary lines between the different regiments, all being tumbled together higgledy-piggledy, officers mixed up anyhow with the men, and the brigade commander in the middle. He was a colonel, a pleasant and gentlemanly young fellow, surrounded by young officers. Their talk about the war and our immediate military future had a tone of depression which astonished me.

"But don't you believe in Grant at all?" I finally asked.

¹⁴U. S. Army Command and General Staff College, Reference Book 22-1, Leadership (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1 July 1964), pp. 26-13, 26-14.

"Yes, we believe in Grant," replied the colonel. "But we believe a great deal more in Lee and that Army of Virginia." (Italics mine.)¹⁵

Symbols

Colors.--Of all the symbols, tangible and intangible, which served to enhance esprit, regimental colors wielded the greatest influence and appeal to the emotions. In battle, they were practical as well as symbolic. Men "steadied themselves on the colors."¹⁶ Officers used them as rallying points and often shouted, "Rally around the old flag!"¹⁷ To be a color bearer was an honor. In battle, it was a perilous honor, because the colors drew more fire than any leader. It was a matter of regimental honor that the flag never fall to the ground or into the hands of the enemy.¹⁸ In one case "eight color-bearers of the regiment fell; while the flag passed from one to another, and was never lowered;"¹⁹ Division commanders, in furtherance of the flag as a builder of esprit, published general orders authorizing regiments to inscribe on their colors the names of battles in which they had fought.²⁰ At least two division commanders deprived regiments of their colors as punishment--in one case for

¹⁵John William De Forest, A Veteran's Adventures, ed. James H. Croushore (New Haven, n.p., 1946), p. 165.

¹⁶Beatty, p. 137.

¹⁷Henry N. Blake, Three Years in the Army of the Potomac (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1865), p. 24.

¹⁸William Morgan, "The Army of the Cumberland Carries Missionary Ridge," The Blue and the Gray, ed. Henry Steele Commager (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950), Vol. II, p. 903.

¹⁹Blake, p. 215.

²⁰Lusk, p. 209.

mutinous conduct,²¹ in the other for having lost their colors to the enemy. Following is a general order published by one of these commanders:

HDQTRS. 2ND DIV. 2ND CORPS.
Aug. 30, 1864.

GENERAL ORDERS NO. 63

The following named regiments having lost their regimental colors in action are hereby deprived of the right to carry colors until by their conduct, in battle they show themselves competent to protect them.

8th New York Heavy Artillery, 164th New York Vols. and 36th Wisconsin Vol.

The officers and men of the command should understand that their colors should be the last thing they surrender and that in all well regulated military organizations it is considered a disgrace for a majority of the command to return from the field of battle without them.

By command of Maj. Gen. Gibbon,

Commdg. Div.

A. HENRY EMBLER,

Capt. & A. A. A. G.²²

Two months later, these regiments "behaved with distinguished bravery," and general orders were published restoring their right to carry colors.²³

Unit nicknames.--Units took on nicknames by general consent of the men. They were one symbol no officer could force on his men. Commanders welcomed and encouraged them, however, for they were one means of setting their units apart from all others (aside from the fact that they sometimes incorporated the commander's own name). One example was "Perry's Saints," nickname of a regiment raised and commanded by a

²¹Stevens, p. 327.

²²John Gibbon, Personal Recollections of the Civil War (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1928), p. 270.

²³Ibid.

Reverend Perry. Although many of the officers and men were far from being saint-like, they were proud of the title.²⁴ Another regiment proudly became the "Rock of Chicamauga" after holding its ground with bayonets when its ammunition was exhausted.²⁵ A brigade, equipped by its commander with the regulation black felt hat which most units discarded, was referred to by rebels as "those black hatted fellows." The men then began calling themselves "The Black Hat Brigade."²⁶

Distinctive uniforms.--Some militia regiments and foreign-blooded regiments reported for duty with their own distinctive uniforms, some quite fancy, some described by other soldiers as grotesque. They continued to wear these uniforms with pride until practicality forced them to accept regulation clothing or their own uniforms became too tattered to wear.²⁷

As in the Black Hat Brigade, other commanders also ordered the type of hat or cap they desired for their units.²⁸ And in one regiment, at the colonel's "request," all the men at their own expense bought

²⁴James M. Nichols, Perry's Saints (Boston: D. Lothrop & Co., 1886), p. 28.

²⁵U. S., Department of the Army, Department of the Army Pamphlet 20-200, The Writing of American Military History (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, June 1956), p. 6.

²⁶Gibbon, p. 93.

²⁷Stevens, p. 327; Nannie M. Tilley (ed.), Federals on the Frontier: The Diary of Benjamin F. McIntyre, 1862-1864 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1963), p. 202.

²⁸Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, War Papers, Commandery of the State of Wisconsin (Milwaukee: Burdick, Armitage & Allen, 1896), Vol. II, p. 353.

white cotton gloves to wear on parade, on guard duty, and at inspections.²⁹

Distinctive insignia.--The American practice of adorning the soldier's uniform with multiple insignia patches, braid, cords, and all sorts of decorative (but meaningful) things which glisten and tinkle has apparently taken hold since the Civil War. The only item of distinctive insignia worn by all Volunteer soldiers was a corps badge. Except for his regiment, the soldier was most proud of his corps, and he wore his corps badge proudly. The badge, a cloth shoulder patch, provided two-way identification. The shape of the patch identified the man's corps, and the color (red, white, or blue) identified his division. There was no brigade or regimental insignia for the uniform.³⁰

In 1863, the War Department offered certain inducements to veteran soldiers to re-enlist for three years or during the war. One of the inducements was the privilege of wearing "service chevrons" identifying the wearer as a "Veteran Volunteer." Administration of this program, however, was not within the realm of division-level officers.³¹

²⁹C. C. Andrews, "The Surrender of the Third Regiment, Minnesota Volunteer Infantry," Glimpses of the Nation's Struggle, ed. The Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, Minnesota Commandery (St. Paul Book and Stationery Co., 1887), Vol. I, p. 343.

³⁰Gerrish, pp. 23-24; George T. Stevens, Three Years in the Sixth Corps (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1870), p. 215.

³¹John M. Paver, What I Saw from 1861 to 1864: Personal Recollections of John M. Paver (Indianapolis: Scott-Miller Co., n.d.), pp. 46-47; Dawes, p. 235.

Leaders' personal symbols.--Grant wore a private's uniform, unadorned except for shoulder straps with three stars.³² Hooker was recognized at a distance because of his huge white horse.³³ Other high commanders, too, had their "trade marks." But, interestingly enough, this study reveals no use of personal symbols by commanders at division level and below. One brigadier general did have an unconscious symbol, but it served only to start rumors. He was quite a smoker and always had an old clay pipe in his mouth. Often, when deep in thought, he let it burn out. When planning something big, he held it in his mouth bottom side up. That was when the rumors started.³⁴

Drill and Parades

Though they cursed the hot, dusty hours spent on the drill field, soldiers took pride in their units' marching proficiency, and when the general announced at dress parade that their regiment "marched as well as regulars," it gave them something to write home about.³⁵

Military Music

While camped near enemy defenses at Richmond, a soldier wrote in a letter home, "We are not allowed to have any music here at all and I have not heard the Tap of a Drum since we have been here, except the Rebels Drums and I tell you it is a little dry soldering [sic]"

³²H. Clay Trumbull, War Memoirs of a Chaplain (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898), p. 308.

³³George T. Stevens, p. 185.

³⁴Henry Norton (ed.), Deeds of Daring: History of the 8th New York Volunteer Cavalry (Norwich, N. Y.: Chanango Telegraph Printing House, 1889), pp. 44-45.

³⁵De Forest, p. 11; Nichols, pp. 70-71.

without music."³⁶ A sergeant in a colored regiment said, "When dat band wheel in before us, and march on,--my God! I quit dis world altogeder."³⁷

Regiments had a sort of our-band-is-better-than-your-band pride in their regimental bands.³⁸ Commanders saw to it that, whenever possible, the band was with the regiment. Even on long, dusty marches in the field, the band "filled the air with martial strains."³⁹ It took the men's minds off their troubles and tired feet.⁴⁰

Bands were authorized at Government expense only at brigade and division headquarters. Nevertheless, most regimental commanders managed somehow to raise a band. In some regiments the officers provided the instruments and equipment with their own money.⁴¹

Summary

So it appears that commanders, as a whole, promoted esprit rather skilfully by recognizing and exploiting the soldier's desire to identify himself with his regiment. They freely gave public recognition to his regiment when it did well, encouraged symbolism (with the regimental colors being the main object of loyalty and affection), and used drill, parades, and music to enhance regimental unity.

³⁶ Leo W. and John I. Faller, Dear Folks at Home (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: The Telegraphic Press, 1963), p. 78.

³⁷ Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Army Life in a Black Regiment (Boston: Lee and Shepard, Publishers, 1882), p. 59.

³⁸ Faller, p. 71.

³⁹ Beatty, p. 83.

⁴⁰ Letter to the Editors, Army and Navy Journal (New York) December 31, 1864, p. 292; Blake, pp. 78-79.

⁴¹ M. A. De Wolfe Howe (ed.), Marching with Sherman: Passages from the Letters and Campaign Diaries of Henry Hitchcock (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1927), p. 32.

CHAPTER VIII

BATTLE PANIC AND LEADERS' CONDUCT

General

One major leadership problem remains to be discussed. It would have been appropriate to include it in the general discussion of discipline in Chapter VI, "Discipline and Leaders' Conduct." However, because it is a special problem peculiar to the battlefield, and because the manner in which officers meet it may easily determine the outcome of battle, it is treated here separately. This critical problem is the prevention and control of panic. The purpose of this chapter is to show, through a series of examples, how Volunteer officers dealt with this battlefield phenomenon.

Prevention of Panic

Of course, one of the purposes of constant drill was to instill the confidence and automatic obedience to orders, which were necessary for the prevention of battlefield panic. But excellence in drill was no sure preventive. Regiments of German-born volunteers, for example, were admired for their ability to march well and the way they held themselves in a soldierly manner. Yet they and their officers panicked and fled in battle, many of them without firing a shot. In fact they

became known as the "Flying Dutchmen."¹ So officers (or at least some of them) recognized the need for other preventive measures.

A captain told of his unit's first march toward the battlefield:

I was anxious, but thus far only for my men, not knowing how they would behave in this their first battle. I commenced joking with them, not because I was gay, but because I wanted them to be gay. I have forgotten what I said; it was poor, coarse fun enough probably; but it answered the purpose.²

A general marched his untried brigade to a position exposed to heavy artillery fire, had them remain there for about fifteen minutes for no apparent reason, then withdrew them. One of his officers said,

At the time I could not imagine what General Davis kept us there in that way for. I found out before the war closed. To make veteran soldiers the Generals must have their men under fire. The troops that could stand such a fire as that, would go anywhere."³

A sort of early-day overhead artillery course, although some of it was not overhead. Fortunately, there were no casualties.

Another brigade commander believed the best way to steady his troops in battle was to give them as much advance information as possible. As brought out earlier, not all commanders shared this view.⁴ The afternoon before his brigade was to participate in a corps assault,

¹ John Chipman Gray and John Codman Ropes, War Letters, 1862-1865 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1927), p. 213; Henry N. Blake, Three Years in the Army of the Potomac (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1865), pp. 178-80.

² John William De Forest, A Veteran's Adventures, ed. James H. Croushore (New Haven, n.p., 1946), pp. 58-59.

³ Henry Norton (ed.), Deed of Daring: History of the 8th New York Volunteer Cavalry (Norwich, N. Y.: Chanango Telegraph Printing House, 1889), pp. 45-46.

⁴ See pp. 88-89.

he made his reconnaissance. Then,

returning to the brigade, I called together the regimental and company commanders and explained to them what was intended and what was expected of us. I also directed that each company should be called out and the men fully informed and instructed what was expected of them. . . . I knew they could be trusted, and felt that success would be more certain if every man knew what was expected of him and felt a personal responsibility. In every desperate charge organization becomes confused, and much depends on the individuals. With officers and men fully informed I felt as sure of going through the enemy's lines the next morning as I could of any future event. (Italics mine.)⁵

The attack was successful. The general wrote that "in this advance nearly all organization was lost, and many were the feats and captures made by companies and squads."⁶ Referring to his intelligent and informed troops, he said they attacked "with muskets in their hands, gleaming with bayonets that think."⁷

Another commander who did share the view that troops should be given a clear awareness of the situation was the general who discussed night movements:

I doubt if soldiers ever make a night movement in an enemy's presence without being under a nervous strain which exaggerates the importance of everything they see or hear, and this gives uncertainty and increases the difficulty of such duty. It is no small part of the duty of officers, in such cases, to allay this tendency to excitement, to explain the situation, and by a wise mixture of information and discipline to keep the men intelligently cool and in full command of their faculties. (Italics mine.)⁸

⁵Lewis A. Grant, "The Old Vermont Brigade at Petersburg," Glimpses of the Nation's Struggle, ed. The Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, Minnesota Commandery (St. Paul Book and Stationery Co., 1887), Vol. I, pp. 397-98.

⁶Ibid., Vol. I, p. 402.

⁷Ibid., Vol. I, p. 401.

⁸Jacob D. Cox, Military Reminiscences of the Civil War (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), Vol. I, pp. 122-23.

The troops of the Third Ohio were given a clear awareness of what lay ahead when their colonel, on the eve of battle, gathered them around him and solemnly addressed them. His speech is a classic in candidness:

Soldiers of the Third [Ohio Regiment]: The assault on the enemy's works will be made in the early morning. The Third will lead the column. The secessionists have ten thousand men and forty rifled cannon. They are strongly fortified. They have more men and more cannon than we have. They will cut us to pieces. Marching to attack such an enemy, so entrenched and so armed, is marching to a butcher shop rather than to a battle. There is bloody work ahead. Many of you, boys, will go out who will never come back again.

The regimental lieutenant colonel thought the speech imprudent. He expressed to the colonel his concern about its demoralizing effect on the regiment. "I urged him to correct the mistake and speak to them hopefully. He replied that what he had said was true, and they should know the truth." Probably fortunately for the regiment, the battle expected the next day did not materialize.⁹

Panic prevention measures which officers commonly employed once the battle had begun included the use of the colors as a rallying point when troops became disorganized. Another was the often-shouted call, "Steady, men, steady, steady, steady!" as one "speaks to frightened and excited horses."¹⁰

Probably the steadiness of officers themselves did more to avert panic than anything else. A situation ripe for panic was an artillery duel in which a Federal battery was getting the worst of it.

⁹ John Beatty, Memoirs of a Volunteer (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1946), p. 26.

¹⁰ Frank Wilkeson, Recollections of a Private Soldier in the Army of the Potomac (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1893), p. 71.

In addition, Confederate infantry had begun an assault. A Confederate sergeant-major observed the actions of the commander of the besieged battery:

His position was plainly an untenable one, and, so far as I could discover with a strong glass, he was for a time without infantry support. But he held his ground and continued to fight in spite of it all, firing at one time as from two faces of an acute triangle. His determination was superb, and the coolness of his gunners and cannoneers was worthy of the unbounded admiration which we, their enemies, felt for them. . . . The loss among his men was appalling, but he fought on as coolly as before, and with our glasses we could see him calmly sitting on his large gray horse directing the work of his gunners and patiently awaiting the coming of his infantry support, without which he could not withdraw his guns. It came at last, and the batteries retired to the new line.

When the battalion was gone and the brief action over, the wreck that was left behind bore sufficient witness of the fearfulness of the fire so coolly endured. The large gray horse lay dead upon the ground; but we preferred to believe that his brave rider was still alive to receive the promotion which he had unquestionably won.¹¹

Control of Panic

Once panic had taken hold and troops were in flight to the rear, the only action left for officers was to personally plant themselves in the path of the fleeing troops and try to stem the tide by the force of their own appearance, voice, and actions. As a division commander, General "Fighting Joe" Hooker arrived on the scene as a beaten and demoralized brigade rushed to the rear in disorder. As an officer recalled it:

General Hooker, who was riding along the lines, at once halted his favorite white horse in the midst of the medley, and exclaimed, "Men! what does this mean? You must hold your ground!" The voice that uttered these simple words had always

¹¹R. U. Johnson and Clarence C. Buel, Battles and Leaders of the Civil War (New York: The Century Co., 1887), Vol. IV, p. 232.

taught justice and patriotism in the camps; the uplifted hand had always returned the salute of every soldier in his division; the form had ever been seen in the front when the storm of bullets fell and spared not; the dress was the uniform of a brigadier-general, who welcomed the dangers that belonged to his rank. The recollection of these exalted qualities flashed through the minds of all, and the commanding appearance was that of one who was "every inch" a general. It inspired the timid with courage; the weak became strong; and every man stopped in his place, and faced the enemy. (*Italics mine.*)¹²

Although his words were probably heard by only a few, the sight of this commander of great prestige, with his arm uplifted, was apparently enough to restore the men to their senses. The implication is here that, had he not held their high regard, no amount of stars on his shoulder straps would have stopped them.

At the Battle of Gettysburg, a young aide-de-camp, who lacked the advantage of prestige, created his own with the shock effect of his sword:

My sword, that had always hung idle by my side, the sign of rank only in every battle, I drew, bright and gleaming, the symbol of command. Was not that a fit occasion, and these fugitives the men on whom to try the temper of the Solingen steel? All rules and proprieties were forgotten; all consideration of person; and danger and safety despised; for, as I met the tide of these rabbits, the damned red flags of the Rebellion began to thicken and flaunt along the walls they had just deserted. . . . I ordered these men "to halt" and "face about" and "fire," and they heard my voice, and gathered my meaning and obeyed my command. On some unpatriotic backs of those not quick of comprehension, the flat of my sabre fell not lightly, and at its touch their love of country returned, and, with a look at me as if I were the destroying angel, . . . they again faced the enemy. (*Italics mine.*)¹³

¹²Cox, p. 73.

¹³John Gibbon, Personal Recollections of the Civil War (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1928), p. 156.

It was unusual for an officer to strike a man. Research reveals few cases of its being done. But this was obviously an unusual situation, and the young staff officer treated it as such.

The Battle of the Crater

Panic was more likely to occur when troops became alarmed by the absence of general officers.¹⁴ At the Battle of the Crater, there was a decided absence of generals at the front--and there was panic. During the siege of Petersburg the Federals devised a plan to dig a tunnel extending to a point under Confederate positions, mine the tunnel with explosives, and exploit the explosion with an infantry assault by Burnside's 9th Corps of four divisions. Ledlie's division, the center assaulting division, was to move through the crater and seize a ridge objective beyond. The two flanking divisions were to move around the crater and seize their positions of the ridge. Ferrero's reserve division was to follow Ledlie. As it turned out, because of a series of neglects and errors of judgment, compounded by the shock of the explosion and devastation, all four divisions gravitated toward the huge crater. Few troops ever got beyond it. Then came a Confederate counterattack. Already confused, officers unable to control them, the troops fled to the rear in panic. Casualties were great, and the opportunity to seize Petersburg was lost.

There were a number of causes for this fiasco, but the one which is pertinent here was the failure of certain commanders to place themselves where they could see and be seen. They were in no position to properly control the operation, to avert panic, or to control it

¹⁴Blake, p. 26.

after it began. A court of inquiry announced that five officers appeared from the evidence "to be answerable for the want of success which should have resulted." The court listed the reasons for its fixing of responsibility on each officer. Of these five officers, certain statements made about three of them are pertinent to this study. One of the statements regarded Brigadier General Ledlie, U. S. Volunteers, a division commander:

Instead of being with his division during the difficulty in the crater, and by his personal efforts endeavoring to lead his troops forward, he was most of the time in a bomb-proof [shelter] ten rods in the rear of the main line of the Ninth Corps works, where it was impossible for him to see anything of the movement of troops that was going on.

Regarding Brigadier General Ferrero, U. S. Volunteers, the reserve division commander:

3. Being in a bomb-proof habitually, where he could not see the operation of his troops,

Concerning Colonel Bliss, Seventh Rhode Island Volunteers, a brigade commander:

In this, that he remained behind with the only regiment of his brigade which did not go forward according to the orders and occupied a position where he could not properly command a brigade . . . and where he could not see what was going on.¹⁵

Perhaps there should have been a band there. At Antietam, a commander had his band cheer the troops with martial music during the charge.¹⁶

¹⁵U. S., War Department, The War of the Rebellion: Official Records (Washington, 1880-1901), Series I, Vol. XL, Part I, pp. 125-34.

¹⁶John B. Gordon, "The Desperate Fighting Along Bloody Lane," The Blue and the Gray, ed. Henry Steele Commager (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950), Vol. I, p. 223.

CHAPTER IX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Fundamentally, we see nothing in the development of modern weapons to change the basic pattern of military leadership. So long as humans strive to kill and conquer one another, and regardless of the complexity of motives and of implements, the qualities of the leader must remain those which have been essential since the dawn of history, and which have so clearly demonstrated their validity in this country since the Revolution.¹

So not only does the nature of the led remain basically unchanged, but also the essential qualities of the leader. Certainly, the nature of war itself has changed since the Civil War. "The drill regulations, the muskets and the cannon are all out-dated. But the human problems are fresh even in this age of computer analysis."² The modern officer will find the following conclusions valuable for professional consideration. They should aid him in recognizing--and dealing with--those human problems, which, I submit, will never be solved by computers. None of these conclusions are revolutionary; some of them only reaffirm currently accepted doctrine; all of those dealing with troop leadership should be considered in the light of the individual officer's personality.

¹R. Ernest Dupuy and Trevor N. Dupuy, Brave Men and Great Captains (New York: Harper & Bros., 1959), p. 353.

²Editorial, "After Appomattox," Army (May, 1965), p. 10.

1) A professional cadre of officers and noncommissioned officers is essential for mobilization of untrained units. Depriving the Volunteer units of experienced cadres during the first year of the Civil War resulted in much floundering and groping. Had a nucleus of Regular Army personnel been placed in Volunteer units early, training would have been more efficient and discipline would have been established more quickly, even in the Militia units, which were relatively untrained when called to active service. It seems reasonable to believe that, had such a plan been adopted, the war would have been shortened.

2) Acceptance of low-grade personnel into service has a demoralizing effect. In the Volunteer army the low-grade personnel were the bounty-jumpers and substitutes. The resulting desertions caused a demoralizing depletion in ranks. The unreliability of these men in battle deprived loyal soldiers of the confidence they needed in their comrades.

3) The professional officer may experience problems of adjustment when assigned to duty with the citizen soldier. Although such problems may arise in regard to modes of dealing with the enlisted soldier, they are more likely to occur in relationships with citizen-officers. The officer must call on his tact and flexibility and make an earnest effort to work in harmony with his civilian colleagues. Senior officers should be aware that some friction may arise between subordinate officers and should be prepared to deal with it.

4) Further research is suggested regarding the effects of prior relationships on discipline in Reserve and National Guard units after call to active duty. A major deterrent to discipline in the Volunteer army early in the war were previous associations of officers

and men who had grown up together and worked together in their home communities. This experience suggests an examination of the effects of such associations on discipline during modern mobilization. Knowing the problem (if there is one) is the first step in treating it.

5) Professional knowledge alone will not earn an officer the confidence and regard of his men.

6) Men must know that their officers are not lacking in personal courage. The Volunteer soldier placed a high premium on personal courage. He watched his officers closely for any sign of "the rascally virtue called caution." The officer who possessed that virtue was scorned. No officer was expected to needlessly expose himself to prove his courage, but he was expected to show it when his time came. General officers were not exempt. Men expected to see their generals at the front frequently. Today, just as then, the officer should carefully avoid any actions which might reasonably cause suspicion about his personal courage.

7) No officer will enjoy the confidence and regard of his men unless they are convinced he is doing his best to look out for their welfare. In the Volunteer army, a major morale factor was the officer's concern for his men. He was hardly expected to make the soldier's life comfortable, but he was expected to prevent unnecessary hardships and mitigate the necessary ones as much as possible.

8) Troop movements require leadership of the highest order. Poorly planned and conducted troop movements, whether by foot march or conveyance, have an adverse effect on morale. Many of the volunteers' complaints concerned officers' inefficiency, thoughtlessness, and neglect during movements, particularly during marches. Movements are

perhaps even more complex today. Officers' carelessness can result in unnecessary fatigue and discomfort, which in turn cause lowered morale and increased straggling.

9) Information enhances discipline and morale and helps prevent fear and panic. Civil War commanders experienced problems of discipline (regarding guard duty and camp sanitation, for example) because the independent young volunteers ("sovereigns in uniform," as one general called them)³ could not understand their importance. They did crave news of happenings around them, however, and news was a definite morale factor. Some officers insured that their troops were fully informed of the tactical situation and found that they not only fought more intelligently (with "bayonets that think") but also were less apt to panic.

10) Leaders should be aware of the significance of sectional and racial differences among their men. The Western soldier, for example, was in some respects a different type of individual. He responded more favorably to less stringent discipline, whereas the soldier in the East was more motivated by the fine points of soldiering. Negro soldiers had difficulty adjusting to changes in climate and suffered heavily from disease. This suggests a difference in physiological make-up, a theory which is reinforced by more recent experience. Studies of cold injuries in Korea indicate a six to one colored to white ratio.⁴ Commanders should be informed of such phenomena so that they may act accordingly.

³R. U. Johnson and Clarence C. Vuel, Battles and Leaders of the Civil War (New York: The Century Co., 1887), Vol. I, p. 192.

⁴U. S. Army, Alaska, Exercise NORTH STAR, Final Report (U. S. Army, Alaska: February 1954), p. 20.

11) Most soldiers prefer their commander to be a firm disciplinarian. They dislike the martinet but appreciate the disciplinarian--in spite of their gripes. This is evident in Volunteer soldiers' comments about their Regular Army officers.

12) The leader who is gentlemanly in his dealings with subordinates gains--rather than loses--their respect. Far from being interpreted as weakness, courtesy on the part of the superior enhances the subordinate's morale and his regard for the leader. Numerous examples of this were brought out in the study. Soldiers particularly appreciated in officers the virtue of approachability. Officers who talked with enlisted men "as one man to another" evoked special comment.

13) Discipline imposed by the well regarded leader receives a more whole-hearted response. Examples in the study indicated that when men felt a high regard for their officers they reinforced commanded discipline with self-imposed discipline.

14) Unorthodox techniques of leadership are sometimes appropriate. The brigade commander who personally drilled each regiment was meeting an unusual situation with an unusual measure, as were the young staff officer who stemmed a panic by striking men with his sword and the general who had his brigade hoot and jeer at all the stragglers they met.

15) Parade ground discipline and battle discipline are not conclusively related. Some regiments drilled superbly but panicked on the battlefield. The Army of the West (particularly Sherman's forces) had little discipline by the usual standards but marched hard and fought well. The Western forces must be included in the "countless examples of successful military forces which had almost no discipline

when measured by the usual yardsticks, yet had a high battle morale productive of the kind of discipline which beats the enemy in battle."⁵

16) Soldiers will not repeatedly carry out orders which they consider stupid and dangerous. Eventually they will balk. They may continue to go through the motions, but they will find a way to thwart those orders. A recent contributor to a military journal facetiously defined discipline as "the cheerful obedience to stupid orders."⁶ The men who were repeatedly massed and thrown against rebel earth-works in frontal assaults and who were repeatedly repulsed with heavy losses would have agreed with that definition. But they found a way to disobey, and, when they had made up their minds their lives were being wasted, they disobeyed.

17) The commander who has undisciplined officers will have undisciplined troops. Colonel Stevens knew this, and one of his first corrective measures in the 79th Highlanders was to require discipline of his officers. General Gibbon knew it, and he changed reveille from a farce into a formation by requiring officers to turn out. General Hooker knew it, and he summoned sleeping officers to drill. The commander who is unwilling to correct negligent officers can hardly expect his officers to correct negligent men.

18) Strong leadership is required to prevent troops from looting. Even well-disciplined troops will loot unless firm precautions are taken. When troops are legitimately "living off the land,"

⁵U. S., Department of Defense, The Armed Forces Officer (Washington: U. S. Printing Office, 1950), p. 148.

⁶Sam Hermont, "Hermont's True Military Lexicon," Army (April, 1965), p. 81.

as may sometimes happen, they should clearly understand the limits of authorized confiscation.

19) Public recognition of deserving individuals and units is an effective tool for development of morale and esprit. Volunteer commanders were generous with praise for the achievements of men and units. General orders, promotions, and personal compliments of commanders were effective motivators.

20) Identification with the unit enhances morale and esprit de corps. Union commanders recognized the soldier's need for more than the "routine of work, . . . mess call, and payday."⁷ He needed to identify himself with something, and that something was his regiment. Commanders aided this identification by recognizing his regiment's achievements, promoting competition between regiments, and encouraging symbolism. These techniques are no less effective today. It is the wise commander who lets the "banners flaunt and bugles blow."

The military significance of the Civil War [to the modern officer] lies in the records we have of how leaders reacted, out of fear or courage, when men fought. And what made the men fight or fail to fight. We know the importance of training, discipline and the development of high spirits. But we can always learn more and sometimes it can be learned from the records of a war fought more than a century earlier.⁸

⁷U. S., Department of Defense, The Armed Forces Officer, p. 164.

⁸Editorial, "After Appomattox," Army (May, 1965), p. 10.

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